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Oyster

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre

by

Ronald McCants

Committee in charge:

Professor Naomi Iizuka, Chair  
Professor Allan Havis  
Professor Adele Edling Shank  
Professor Cauleen Smith

2010



This thesis of Ronald McCants is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for  
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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2010

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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Oyster

by

Ronald McCants

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre

University of California, San Diego, 2010

Professor Naomi Iizuka, Chair

A Black-American man reconnects with the biological son he abandoned many years ago. As the two get to know each other, secrets from the past emerge that threaten to change everything. Can we ever know the truth of our own history? How can ghosts from our past destroy us? And how do we free ourselves from the demons that haunt us? This is an exploration of the Black-American experience through the prism of one father and son relationship.

## Oyster

### CHARACTERS:

ANTHONY – Black. Plays ages 15-34. A man in the process of pulling himself up by his own bootstraps. He wears an Oyster Lipton. It's a wind up watch.

TONY- Anthony's father. He's 18 years older than Anthony. A man who doesn't own up to anything. Truck driver. Easy going. Fun.

JEFF – White, early 20s. Anthony's frat brother and composition tutor. A lover of philosophy, literature, economics, and debauchery. A man who's learning the meaning of life.

DAN – White, early 50s. Tony's longtime friend. He sublets from Tony. A short attention span. A man coming to terms with everything. Maybe he chews tobacco.

XAVIER – White, early 20s. An intern. Poor. A man in the process of pulling himself up by his own bootstraps.

## AUTHOR'S NOTES:

### *Pearls*

Natural pearls take a long time to grow. It can take over ten years. Natural pearls are very rare because natural pearl oysters avoid taking in foreign objects. After a pearl is formed, nearly 50% of these oysters die. The process for making a pearl usually starts with a food particle or a grain of sand that gets stuck inside the oyster. It irritates the oyster and the oyster produces nacre to coat the irritant that it can't remove. When pearl farmers grow pearls, they usually must wait until the oyster is mature before an irritant is introduced. Over this long process, many oysters don't survive because of death, disease, temperature changes in water, and rejection of the irritant.

### *On Beats, Silences, Moments, and Rests*

What is a beat in life? It's simply a pause; we take a second to think about what comes next. A moment, isn't specific to human nature; it's animalistic- a greater sense of self. A moment doesn't need words. Does a gazelle need the lion to roar before it runs? A moment is but a visual recognition that all voyeurs identify. Sometimes moments last only a split second, but they leave behind an indelible impression on our brains for the rest of our lives. Silences are times we may not know what to say and we wait. And, all creatures rest. We rest to take another breath. To breathe in God, so we may send wind into this musical instrument we call life. In death, we hope to rise with a second breath. I wonder, in the moment before we die, do we count our lives divine masterpieces filled with: beats, silences, moments, rests, crescendos, decrescendos, notes...

### *Stage Directions*

Stage directions are meant to guide the reader through the story. The placement of the directions does not necessarily indicate the exact place of action. They are good indicators of where things happen. Beats, silences, moments, and rests do not pertain to this device. In essence, I'm saying find the right place for it during the performance.

### *Doubling*

Jeff, Dan, and Xavier should be played by one actor.

### *Setting*

Perhaps this whole play takes place in a watch or a clock. Maybe there are gears and springs, numbers, and hands. Maybe there is a way to track time. Maybe there are first and second hands that move and dance. Just remember that sometimes the first and second hand are in alignment, but most of the time they are not.

### *Overlapping Dialogue*

Sometimes the characters should overlap dialogue. If you're an actor, discover this on your own. Choose where your character would and should overlap.

*The Watch*

It's a wind up watch. The actor playing Anthony should develop a strong relationship with it. Wind it up. Play with it. Tap it. Take it off. Put it on. Just have fun with it.

**ACT I**  
**1.**

(At a restaurant. TONY sits at a table waiting. He eats pancakes and eggs. Across from TONY there's a football, still in its package and a plate of pancakes, eggs, and bacon. Eventually, ANTHONY enters with a Steven King novel.)

Anthony?  
TONY

(A moment. They shake hands.)

Hi.  
ANTHONY

Hi... It's.  
TONY

(A moment.)

Wow.  
ANTHONY  
Smells... good.

TONY  
Here, sit. (*Beat.*) Look like you ain't nevaBeenHereBefore.

ANTHONY  
I haven't.

TONY  
Sit down, Junior, I ordered you some pancakes and eggs. I know you like pancakes and eggs.

(ANTHONY sits.)

ANTHONY  
My mom's waiting for me outside.

TONY  
You scared of me or something,

ANTHONY  
(*Beat.*) No. I ain't scared of you.

I ain't gonna do nothing to you.

TONY

I know.

ANTHONY

You don't got ya license?

TONY

I got my permit. I drove down here actually.

ANTHONY

TONY  
She prolly... hollerin' her head off at ya: "Turn here; stay in the right lane; go-the-light's green! Yellow mean speed up!"

(ANTHONY laughs at the truth.)

You laughin... Ain't never met nobody that tight. She always been that way. Bella need to let you drive and just be quiet.

Bella?

ANTHONY

OhShe don't go by Bella no more.

TONY

My Dad calls her Annie.

ANTHONY

(Silence.)

TONY  
Go on, eat. Them some buttermilk pancakes, crispy bacon (I hate fatty bacon)—

Me too—

ANTHONY

TONY  
I know, it's all chewy and... can't stand it.

ANTHONY

Do these [eggs] have American [cheese]?

TONY

Who eat eggs without American cheese? I Know I Can't. Shoot... Boy, goan'head and eat. I know you can put down some food now. I ain't never found a place make better breakfast than this backwoods kitchen. I shole do miss Springfield.

(They eat in silence. Well, maybe Tony smacks his food.)

Oh! You like football?!

ANTHONY

Yeah.

TONY

I-I-I-I got you a football... What you know about football; you play football?

ANTHONY

I want to, but my Mom said it's too rough.

TONY

What?!

ANTHONY

Cause my asthma. [*He squirts a puff from his inhaler into the air.*] She "don't got money for the emergency room."

TONY

You not gonna git hurt.

ANTHONY

*Well...* In seventh grade I played for a minute. I was pretty good. We were doing a drill where two people go for a fumble. And, it was my turn. And, I was winning 'cause I was faster than the other guy. Then! I tripped on my shoelaces and broke my arm the day before the first game, so, technically, I've never played. I don't wanna really play anyways. I really like tennis.

TONY

You a Tennis-Tall-Tale!

ANTHONY  
It's fun.

TONY  
Who you kidding?

ANTHONY  
I told her I grew out my asthma. I don't even need to take my puffs 'lest I have a cold. She forcing me to poison myself with Albuterol! But, all she wants is for me to not break nothing—

TONY  
You a boy; you supposed to break. That's what boys do.

ANTHONY  
I know!

TONY  
If you get hurt, you get hurt.

ANTHONY  
I know! I told her, but.

TONY  
But, she said, she don't wanna see you get hurt.

ANTHONY  
Yup.

TONY  
Shoooooot, when I played football, man, I broke my leg in a tackle; broke my pinky finger falling off a ladder; playing baseball and I strained my back; fractured my foot from running so much in the Army; and, got a concussion from your MamaWeShould-WeShouldPlayCatchSoon.

ANTHONY  
OK.

TONY  
Peter play with you?

ANTHONY  
Nope.

TONY

Figures. I don't know what Bella see in his ole water-head self. Looking like Bryant Gumble, please... How Kendra? She look like Bella?

ANTHONY

I don't know.

TONY

She real light-skinned-ed?

ANTHONY

Look like an Oreo.

TONY

You kiddin'—

ANTHONY

We git in trouble for calling her whitey. But, she look mixed! Her hair be everywhere, all up in the tub.

TONY

She scared of me or something?

ANTHONY

No, she just had a cheerleading thing.

TONY

Cheerleader? OK then. She was just learning to walk when. You had just had your third birthday, when Bella left me in Panama... Now she getting tossed up in the air, golly!

ANTHONY

Kendra not getting tossed up no where. She bigger than most of the football team, she a spotter.

(TONY laughs.)

TONY

Next time I come through, I gotta see her.

ANTHONY

Well, just call. To let us know you coming. Next time.

(Beat.)

You like your breakfast?

TONY

It's good.

ANTHONY

Bella mad at me?

TONY

What were you like when you were my age?

ANTHONY

You sixteen, uh—

TONY

Fifteen.

ANTHONY

Fifteen, well, I was, umm... I was... bad.

TONY

What'd you do?

ANTHONY

Everything! That's why I ended up in the Army. Needed to learn some discipline, junior.

TONY

(Silence.)

Please don't call me that. I don't go by that.

ANTHONY

Why not?

TONY

I just don't.

ANTHONY

(Silence.)

TONY  
How he treating you?

ANTHONY  
Who?

TONY  
Yo' step-daddy.

(Beat.)

ANTHONY  
(*Shrugging.*)  
Eh...

(A moment.)

TONY  
Mmmhmm... You still like scary books?

ANTHONY  
Yeah.

TONY  
I like reading.

ANTHONY  
That's cool.

TONY  
Used to write little stories for me... You still write?

ANTHONY  
No.

TONY  
I sure wish you would. I betchu you'd make a good writer. I'd read every word. I wrote 'bout living in Korea. The whole country smell like cabbage and kim chi. Now that is some shit Steven King can't write now— [*Laughingly.*] Remember when I sent you that big ole box of scary books?!

ANTHONY  
Yeah.

TONY

Oh, man!

ANTHONY

I was in fourth grade. *(Beat.)* You realize I was in fourth grade?

TONY

Yeah.

ANTHONY

I had nightmares.

TONY

That's good horror, baby!

ANTHONY

Some of those books had too much sex for a nine year old... When I said I liked scary books, I meant Goosebumps. Like *The Scarecrow Walks at Midnight!* Not, I killed two girls and here's my life as a death row inmate going down the green mile, here MousyMousy. *(Beat.)* It's OK.

TONY

I'm so sorry. I screwed that up too. Fuck me!

ANTHONY

I read'em all anyway.

TONY

*(Laughing. To himself.)*

I'm such a fuck up. I should've read'em before I sent'em to you. So obvious, [*To himself.*] so obvious, Tony.

ANTHONY

I didn't know what all that stuff was anyways. I mean I do now, of course. I'm pretty much a man.

TONY

I remember when I was collecting'em. My cell mate, Jerry, talking 'bout, "Why you working so hard; buying these books you don't never read?!" I was working like crazy. Didn't have nothing else to do. Working in the kitchen. I can whip up some beans, boy. Boil some hamhocks. Pop them cans. Put that shit in a pot. Wha-la: beans. You know they only paid us ten cent an hour at Fort Leavenworth.

ANTHONY

They were ripping you off, man! Minimum wage is eight dollars. You can make more at Burger King.

TONY

It's not like that. (*Beat.*) Your letters were the only-est thing that kept me. They were so... I really appreciated them.

ANTHONY

Oh...[*really...*]

TONY

Why'd you stop writing?

ANTHONY

My mom told me when you'd get out. I wrote one time, but you didn't send one back. I figured you were like: eh. [*While shrugging.*]

(Rest.)

My Mom really needs child support. She works way too hard, she never gets time off, I know you don't know me, but it'd really help. She's working herself to death.

TONY

From the time we split up— I send her child support every month. I'm gonna call down there on Monday, cause they taking money out my check every month for it. I make sure they take out that child support.

ANTHONY

I'll tell her to check too.

TONY

Cause it don't make sense to me. Somebody getting rich! Maybe she getting it and don't know. (*Beat.*) I was thinking, maybe I could get you a car for your sixteenth. (*Beat.*) I know this place in Charlotte that got BMWs for good prices.

ANTHONY

A BMW?!

TONY

Yeah.

ANTHONY

That would like make

TONY

It'd be a few years old,

everything easier!

like thirty thousand miles on it—

ANTHONY

You serious?!

TONY

I'll talk to Bella 'bout it. I got the number now.

ANTHONY

We don't got no money for a car. When you think we could get it?

TONY

End of the summer maybe.

ANTHONY

I'd take care of it! *(Beat.)* Can I call you on your cell phone?

TONY

Yeah, man. I'm always in my truck; call me anytime.

ANTHONY

Wanna play catch or something? There's a park around here I saw, I can tell my Mom to pick me up later. Man!

*(A moment.)*

TONY

I'm running late. I gotta get outta here... Anthony. But! I promise I'll be back through here in a month or two. And, we'll play. It's gonna git better. I promise.

*(Silence.)*

Ok, then.

gets a

*(TONY goes in for a hug, but he only*

*handshake. He leaves money on the table.*

*TONY exits. A moment. ANTHONY sees*

*something. It's a watch on the table. He picks it up and puts it on. It's perfect.)*

2.

(ANTHONY conjures the memory of his mother. Free of time and space. House music plays.)

ANTHONY

*(As his mother Annabelle, to the audience. The audience is Anthony.)*

You got one mo' time to change lanes in an intersection before you Ain'tGoanBeDrivingNoMo, shoot, people die in cars, where you going to so fast you gotta change lanes and move around on the road like you do? We ain't going no where but Sonic.

You just like yo daddy. God I hate that man. The thought of him. Oh, no she didn't! I know she didn't just cut my baby off like she crazy, I'd snatch off my wig so fast and take it to the streets in a hot minute. Folks crazy!

(Bella turns the music down.)

You betta not turn out like him. That'd be my worst nightmare. Worst thing you could do to me. I mean we had lots of fun together. If you got to know'em, maybe y'all'd get along I don't know. I actually think that would be a good thing.

I once took a skillet to his head. Lord, I know I'm wrong, but I hit him up 'side his head and he had the nerve to pretend he had a concussion. He 'posed to be watching y'all. This nigga go to the store and rushes home all fast with you and Kendra in the back. He so much in a hurry to see some ole dumb basketball game, he forgot y'all in the car.

Honey, I come home from working in that nasty hospital and I find y'all still in the backseat of his car. I snuck up behind him and wacked him hard as I could with that skillet. Honey! I said, "I promise you I ain't done with you. Fall asleep, nigga, I'mma cut yo' throat!" That nigga got his stuff and went on to the barracks. He stopped giving me money to feed y'all. "How we supposed to eat, Tony?" Stingy self. I had to go to his superior to get money. What that make me look like? Asking for money and I'm a grown woman. When I had to do that; I said, "Self! This over, honey."

Boy! Stop hugging the center of the road like you ain't been taught! You doing good. *(Beat.)* You're such a good kid. I love this music... If there ever comes a time when you need me, and I can't be there. Listen to this and I'll pull you through.

(Bella turns the music off.)

Now, I'mma tell you something. Don't want you repeating it to nobody. Not even Peter. And, Kendra don't need to know yet either, can't keep your mouth shut for nothing. (*Silence.*) Ain't nothing to worry about, but. I'm sick.

3.

for  
 (At the cemetery. Time has passed.  
 ANTHONY sits on a bench by himself  
 a solid minute, waiting. Maybe here he  
 winds up his watch. He gets up to leave,  
 but  
 TONY catches him in the nick of time.)

Anthony...  
 TONY

(*Walking away.*)  
 Hey.  
 ANTHONY

TONY  
 I'm-sorry-I'm-sorry-I'm-sorry-I'm-sorry-I'm-sorry... I drove here all night.

ANTHONY  
 Humph.  
 TONY  
 I'm just a little late, I'm stupid...  
 Did Kendra stick around?

ANTHONY  
 Nope. They're all at the reception, and I'm, what, two hours late for that.

(A moment.)

TONY  
 Ya like the watch. (*Beat.*) Don't walk away... I'm a dumb ass, Anthony... I should've been here! I should've been here on time, man! I was, man, you gotta understand. This hit me hard. It came out of left field, man, and.

ANTHONY  
 Where's your "truck?"

TONY  
 Oh, I uh, rented a car. Parked a ways back. How you doing?

ANTHONY

Fine.

TONY

Why didn't y'all tell me 'til it was too late?

ANTHONY

I don't know.

TONY

There were some things we needed to talk about.

(Silence.)

What'd she have?

(A moment.)

ANTHONY

She didn't want people to know. She dead now, so I guess it don't really matter.

TONY

It matter. You don't have to tell me [*if*] you not supposed to.

(A moment.)

ANTHONY

Glioblastoma Multiforme. It's a stage four astrocytomas. Basically, umm... brain tumor.

TONY

Gosh.

(Beat.)

ANTHONY

What'd you wanna tell her? She didn't have anything to say to you, I asked her.

(A moment.)

TONY

You driving now?

ANTHONY

Yup.

TONY

What you driving?

ANTHONY

A Chevy Cavalier!

TONY

How much you pay for it?

(Beat.)

ANTHONY

Sixty-nine dollars a month.

TONY

How old is it?

ANTHONY

Twelve.

TONY

It ride good?

ANTHONY

It's a Cavalier.

TONY

Maybe we could take it for a spin.

ANTHONY

Listen, man, I don't wanna do this, I'm going to school in few weeks—

TONY

What grade you in?

ANTHONY

I graduated from high school in May.

TONY

What?!

HowOldYouThinkIAm? ANTHONY

I. Wow. Time flies. TONY

Yup. ANTHONY

I wanted to come for graduation. TONY

Everyone says they wanted to. Peter, Grandma 'nim. My mom did... Now you. Whatever. I should be happy that at least one person came and listened to my graduation speech. Can always count on Kendra. ANTHONY

You gave a speech? TONY

Sure did. I'm salutatorian and class president. (Was anyway.) ANTHONY

Where you going for your schooling? TONY

Dartmouth College. ANTHONY

Where's that? TONY

New Hampshire. ANTHONY

I've been there; that's upstate New York. TONY

No, New Hampshire's that whole state next to Maine (WhyEverybodySayThat?). ANTHONY

Know what you gonna study? TONY

ANTHONY

I'm planning on being a neurosurgeon, so, neuroscience... They get paid.

TONY

Oh.

ANTHONY

I'm not gonna be poor. That's one thing I'm not gonna be.

TONY

What happened to writing horror stories?

ANTHONY

I grew up. I kinda hate it now. Just not my thing, don't wanna be something I'm not.

TONY

OK.

(Silence.)

You have a girlfriend?

ANTHONY

Nope.

(A moment.)

I haven't found a girl I liked, I've only had time for school and when my Mom got sick. Maybe I'll find a girlfriend in college.

TONY

I hear that's the place to find'em. Just make sure you protect yourself.

ANTHONY

I'm not even thinking about that, man, that's just. I'm just talking about a girlfriend.

TONY

Yeah, but things happen and you need to be prepared.

ANTHONY

I'm going to Dartmouth. Nobody does that.

TONY

I have a girlfriend. Been dating her for two years now; it's pretty serious. We live together. You should come out for a visit.

ANTHONY

My mom is in the fucking grave over there. She's dead! Seriously, man!

(A moment. Silence.)

TONY

She has a son. Thornton. I call him Spike. But, he's a little fairy... been with his mother too long.

(Silence.)

ANTHONY

How old is he?

TONY

Fifteen. I try to play catch with him, but he can't even catch the ball. Always crying about breaking a nail. Just makes me so mad.

(A moment.)

ANTHONY

Are you drunk?

TONY

No. No, I. (*Beat.*) I had a little something to drink, but. I'm not drunk.

(Long silence.)

ANTHONY

What?

TONY

I just see so much in you. There have been geniuses in my family. My uncle was a judge. You're. You're like him, I can see it. And, I can see Bella in you, but I can see a lot of me in you too.

(Two opposing moments.)

You look like your grandpa.

ANTHONY  
He's dead?

TONY  
Yeah. (*Beat.*) When do you leave?

ANTHONY  
In four weeks; can't wait to get outta here.

TONY  
Peter taking you?

ANTHONY  
I'm driving by myself it looks like; don't know what I'm gonna do about my car.  
Can't bring my car 'til Winter quarter... I'll figure something out.

TONY  
Why isn't Peter taking you?

ANTHONY  
Long or short version?

TONY  
I'll take the short.

ANTHONY  
Good choice. He's too busy, we don't get along, I don't want him to come. End of  
story.

TONY  
Kendra could go with you.

ANTHONY  
If I buy her a plane ticket back. But, I spent all my money on the funeral. She has  
money. She's so...! Whatever.

(*Beat.*)

TONY  
I can drive with you. I got vacation time...

ANTHONY  
I'm too old for this.

TONY

No, you name the time and I'll be at your doorstep- ready to go.

ANTHONY

I gotta get to the reception.

TONY

I can ride with you.

ANTHONY

I think it's best if you don't go.

TONY

That's fine.

ANTHONY

Well, I guess—

TONY

How about you just take me for a spin in your Cavalier?

ANTHONY

Don't think I have time; if you had got here two hours ago.

TONY

It's fine, I understand.

(Beat.)

ANTHONY

Look, I saw you last night at the wake. I saw you outside.

TONY

I just got here.

ANTHONY

You drive a semi tractor trailer with your name on the side. I saw you. OK? I was sitting on my friend's porch across the street. I saw you pull up, you stayed in the truck for over an hour. Then. I watched you pull off, you didn't even try. To go in. Didn't care how me or Kendra— I was gonna ask you, "Why?" Because I was outside too, so I was gonna ask, "Why," but I don't think I even wanna... Cause, I can't trust you. Not even a little bit. (Beat.) You didn't have to lie to me. You just didn't! Everything you ever told me was a lie, she could've been alive had she the money, maybe! If you had paid child support, maybe. God!

TONY

I paid child support! She was getting it.

ANTHONY

I managed the banking account since I was thirteen. She wasn't... Yeah. So what...? What do you have to say?

TONY

I walked here! Anthony... I walked ten miles. It took me five hours to get here. And, yeah, I got fucked up last night. I couldn't drive my truck this morning I'm sorry that I'm not better than this, but. [*To himself.*] Damn it, Tony! [*To his son.*] I know... I know.

(TONY attempts to walk away.)

You betta get to the reception. (*Beat.*) I'll see you in four weeks. You have my number, so if you want me to go, call and tell me, and, I'll fly to Springfield. If you don't. Call. I understand. I will. But, I'd really like to go with you. I hope you understand that 'least.

ANTHONY

Aiiight.

TONY

Thanks for waiting for me.

ANTHONY

Yup. (*Beat.*) Thanks [*Referring to the watch.*].

(ANTHONY walks away eventually.)

4.

(In Anthony's beat up Chevy Cavalier, but not. In a liminal space, but not. Everything Anthony owns is: in the car, on top of the car, in the trunk, and in the passenger seat where TONY sits, but not. ANTHONY drives. TONY smokes like a chimney. FYI: They do not have to be sitting down in an actual car or sitting

down for that matter. Maybe there are puppets.)

TONY

*(While laughing.)*  
But, did you see her?

*(TONY mocks someone.)*

ANTHONY

*(While laughing.)*  
That's not funny!

TONY

*(While mocking her.)*  
Walking around like she cute... I clocked her the minute we went in. Damn shame.

ANTHONY

She has to be like fifty.

TONY

Betchu she ain't even thirty-five. Ole ugly self. Why meth-heads try ta smile at you when they don't got no teeth?!

*(They laugh at the inappropriateness.  
No, that shit is funny!)*

ANTHONY

We're going to Hell for laughing.

TONY

This remind me of being in the military. We be doing a tour. It ain't nothing but dudes farting and laughing at folk. That's all we did for, you know, eighteen months or however long we was deployed. It was fun. BestTimeOfMyLife.

*(ANTHONY looks for his journal.)*

What you looking for?

ANTHONY

It should be in the front part of my backpack, I never not put it there. (Where's my journal?)

TONY

This it?

ANTHONY

What's it doing over there?

TONY

Beats me.

ANTHONY

*(Flipping through the journal.)*

What the fuck?! *(Beat.)* You wrote in my journal!

TONY

Just a coupla things.

ANTHONY

I didn't give you permission to read my journal!

TONY

I think they're really good. It's fine; it's OK. It's just a bunch of scary stories. You need to get them published.

ANTHONY

This is mental rape! I feel virtue going out of my body!

TONY

Don't be so dramatic! Why write if you never goan let nobody read it? That's a waste of time.

ANTHONY

*(Trying to read a note.)*

"This is... Mo'? Likea. Movieeee? Have ya read. Somethang 'bout—"

TONY

Gimmie that. *(Making fun of people.)* "Have you read anything about Civil War ghosts?"

ANTHONY

You have the worst handwriting and you wrote all up in my journal.

*(ANTHONY coughs from the smoke. He takes a puff from his inhaler.)*

TONY

I was in a rush... If you told me about the stories, maybe I wouldn't have to sneak around and read 'em.

(TONY puts the cigarette out. A moment.)

ANTHONY

[*Flipping through the journal.*]  
You didn't have to write in it.

TONY

Don't cry about it.

ANTHONY

Dude, I'm not crying.

TONY

Look like you 'bout to.

ANTHONY

I'm mad. My eyes get watery when I'm mad.

TONY

You want a hug?

ANTHONY

No!

TONY

(*Reading from Anthony's journal, but not. Possibly use shadow puppetry.*)  
When there's a blood red moon, don't go to sleep. P.T. Bowl's marching. P.T. Bowl was the son of a mean Cherokee Chief and his Black slave. P.T. Bowl had the strength of ten demons. The medicine man put the demons inside him the day he was born. He couldn't control them. They made 'em kill. His only friend was war. He never took sides. He just killed. He fought in the Barbary Wars. The Creek War. The War of 1812. The Civil War. And... the Mexican War. In between wars, he murdered soldiers. He'd sneak into their homes and slice their throats. As he got older and older, his victims got younger and younger. He stopped killing soldiers and started killing little boys. Thousands of boys. Before they had a chance to become soldiers. (*Beat.*) P.T. Bowl died peacefully in his sleep, made it clear into his eighties. When he died, his thirst for blood lived on. (*Beat.*) If you're a young boy reading this, it's your turn. When the moon's blood red, don't go to sleep! P.T.

Bowl's ghost will climb on you and slice your throat. Blood will color your bed.  
Blood will color the moon.

(Silence.)

That's not-That's not scary...

ANTHONY

Yes it is.

TONY

P.T. Bowl ain't nothing but John WhoIsHe-Slasher. It's like all the slasher movies, man. P.T. Bowl haunts you and slashes your throat, end of story. He can't be killed.

ANTHONY

That's the point.

TONY

I love that story about the hellhounds! Man! That's almost scary. That ghost slave catcher coming after you with the hellhounds. You trying to runaway from stuff, but the hellhounds will pick up on your scent and hunt you for forever if they have to. You'll always be running. You can't never stay too long in one place. Where'd you hear about hellhounds?

ANTHONY

Just made it up.

TONY

What were you thinking about when you made that story up about the demons that can come up inside you?

ANTHONY

Which one?

TONY

What's it... You know the one, "twice a day a demon comes out to play."

ANTHONY

*The Suicides?*

TONY

Yeah. *The Suicides!* I mean, whoa! How did you think of that? I'd never think to make a demon jump inside people at three PM and have someone kill them-self by

three AM. It's spooky. I mean, I don't believe in that kinda heebee-jeebee stuff, but if I did... Ah, man! Gives me goose pimples. And, you wanna be a neurosurgeon?

ANTHONY

Yeah—

TONY

Man, that's crazy. If you worried 'bout money, you shouldn't. I never told you, but. When I was growing up, I wanted to be a pilot in the Air Force, so one day I could be an Astronaut. My biggest dream... Didn't have the right scores or the talent... You got the talent to be a good writer. Lots of folks wanna be writers, but that's God-given. You can't learn to write. I keep trying, but I can't. Don't got the talent like you.

ANTHONY

You really think they're good?

TONY

I think they're awesome.

(A moment.)

You still like toy soldiers?

ANTHONY

Awkwaaaaaaaaard turtle!

TONY

What, why's that wrong?

ANTHONY

Toy soldiers. Really?

TONY

I was wondering... how you thought about the soldiers in that P.T. Bowl Story. Thank you very much, Doctor Judgmental.

ANTHONY

I just thought of it, I don't know.

TONY

You used to have so many toy soldiers. They'd be everywhere on the floor, on the couch. There wasn't a single morning I woke up and didn't find a toy soldier stuck in my ass!

When I was a baby?

ANTHONY

Yeah, in Panama.

TONY

Panama?

ANTHONY

Yeah, you don't remember living in Panama on the base?

TONY

I lived out of the country before?

ANTHONY

Yeah. For about a year. We moved there just after Kendra was born. Yo' Mama left me after a year. What happened to your passport?

TONY

I just got one. Planning to do a study abroad term in Barcelona. I ain't know I had one before.

ANTHONY

"Ain't?" Ain't ain't a word. Ain't ain't in the dictionary.

TONY

You can "shole" talk.

ANTHONY

(They share a laugh.)

TONY

Wow... I can't believe. Bella, Bella, Bella, Bella. She never told you 'bout living in Panama?

(Silence.)

We don't have to talk about her if you don't want to.

ANTHONY

Nah, I'm good.

TONY

You know we met during basic training? Your mama was a nurse.

ANTHONY

She was in the Army?

TONY

Yeah, and she was pretty good. She was better than me at most things to tell you the truth, but. She wanted to be a nurse. She was three, four years older than me. I came in as a new recruit. One thing led to another, and we. Poof! Got married and had a kid. I went over to Korea for a year, came back. She had another kid and we moved to Panama. Then, Bella left me. ‘Ccusing folks of cheating... We had a divorce. That messed up my life. Then, I was up for reenlistment, when somebody tried to rob me in Fort Port, Louisiana. Man, the Army teach you to go from zero to a hundred in split second. Teach you not to be afraid of nothing an’ nobody. And, I killed’em. They said I used excessive force, but. The man tried to rob me and I didn’t mean to kill’em! That’s how I ended up in military prison. That’s how I ... ended up driving trucks. But, LifeGoesOn! You live and you learn; hey! I’m doing good now. I’m driving with my son to college and things are looking up.

ANTHONY

Please, don’t call me that.

TONY

Anthony you are. Nothing gonna change about that.

ANTHONY

The best we’re ever gonna be are acquaintances. I already have a dad.

TONY

Peter is your step-dad, I’m your father. What he do for you?

ANTHONY

Peter is my dad.

TONY

He’s not! I am!

ANTHONY

You know what? She did have something to tell you before she died. “Tell the sperm donor, no hard feelings.” “*Ain’t*” that funny?

TONY

How you fix yo' face to tell somebody some shit like that?! I'm the one taking you to gat damn mutha fucking Dar...Muff!

ANTHONY

Dartmouth!

TONY

Fuck that, man! I ain't taking you just because. Like we friends on the playground. It's cause we family! So, fuck you. You're a fucking tight ass. You need to grow the fuck up! I guess you're really learning about me now. Gonna run back tell everybody how mean and hateful I am. Cause I'm not. I'm just telling you the truth. Irregardless of the fact I'm your father. That's one guy to another. You're a fucking prick sometimes and you know it.

ANTHONY

Whatever.

TONY

Whatever?

ANTHONY

Yeah, Tony, "Whatever." Ya done yet? Bagging on people. You must be tripping.

TONY

I'm not tripping!

ANTHONY

Got that monkey on your back?

(A moment.)

TONY

I don't care what Bella told you. I don't do coke no more.

ANTHONY

Oh, you moved to crack? Bobby and Whitney say crack is wack.

TONY

*(As calm as possible.)*

Anthony... You don't say those kinda things to a parent... I don't care how much you hate them. How much they hurt you. You just don't do that, OK?

(A long silence.)

Why don't you pull over right there? I'll drive.

(ANTHONY pulls over. They get out the car and switch drivers. ANTHONY changes the radio station to something they're both too young to listen to. They listen to it for a while until TONY changes it to something cool but weird.)

This what a man listens to. (*Beat.*) By the way.

ANTHONY

It's my car.

TONY

So? Passengers sit and drivers control the music. That's the rule.

ANTHONY

Who's rule?

TONY

I'm sure the rule's in one of the thousand books you got stacked up in the trunk weighing the car down, I ain't never seen a person have that much stuff to move and they ain't going no where but college. (Don't make no sense.)

(TONY gets comfortable and gets ready to sleep.)

ANTHONY

What are you doing?

TONY

Time to get some sleep.

ANTHONY

Why don't we just go to a hotel?

TONY

You got hotel money?

ANTHONY

Why don't I just keep driving?

TONY

You been driving the last five, six hours. It's my turn.

ANTHONY

But, if you're gonna sleep—

TONY

It's just a twenty minute nap. (*Beat.*) First rule of driving is to never drive sleepy.

(TONY falls asleep.)

5.

(The Next day. Tony keeps trying to start the Cavalier. It just won't turn on.)

TONY

I think it might be the starter.

ANTHONY

Maybe.

TONY

Cars just do this kinda thing.

ANTHONY

Man...

TONY

We got it. What's her name?

ANTHONY

Who?

TONY

Your car.

ANTHONY

It don't have a name.

TONY

First of all it's a *She*. Second, *she* doesn't have a name; why haven't you named her?

ANTHONY

I don't know.

(A moment.)

TONY

What about Cherry? Or, Cinnamon... Cinnamon would be good. Mmmhmm...! Ok, no? What about Pumpkin or Desire... Better yet: Delicious... Or, Peaches.

(A moment.)

ANTHONY

You spend a lot of time at strip clubs.

TONY

(*Obviously lying.*)  
No.

ANTHONY

That's a shame. (*Beat.*) Rebecca.

TONY

Oh, OK, it's your car... "Rebecca's" cool...

ANTHONY

Don't judge me.

TONY

(*Obviously lying again.*)  
I'm not...

(Music continues to play.)

ANTHONY

Why are we naming *her*?

TONY

Cause sometimes you gotta talk sweet to her. Cause sometimes saying her name is the only thing to get that motor runnin!

ANTHONY

Annabelle... Or, how about Bella.

(Silence.)

TONY

I think that'd be a nice name.

(Beat. TONY rubs on the car. He tries to start it.)

Come on, Bella. Come on, baby. Come on, Anthony; it ain't gonna hurt you.

TONY

Come on, Baby. Give it to daddy again... I know it's morning, but big daddy needs some loving. Let's rub on her together. Come on, there we go. There we go! Come on, baby, yeah... Yeah! Almost!

ANTHONY

Come on, Mama. You can do it! We gotta—

We gotta get... there.

Umm...

ANTHONY

*(Stopping Tony from turning the ignition again.)*

OK, her name cannot be Bella! Her name is Peaches!

TONY

Aiiight, whatever, man.

(TONY tries a couple more times. It doesn't turn on.)

Let's give Peaches a break, we been riding her pretty hard!

ANTHONY

OK-OK-OK!

TONY

What's wrong?

ANTHONY

Nothing. I just don't wanna be late.

TONY

We not gonna be late.

ANTHONY

Supposed to be there tomorrow for my Dartmouth Outing Club trip. Doesn't look like that's gonna happen. That's OK. If I miss it, we can do our own trip.

TONY

Good idea... We should have a vacation. But, we not gonna miss it. What kinda trip you supposed to go on?

ANTHONY

Advanced rock climbing. Like all the freshmen have D.O.C. trips before orientation. Some people go fishing and stuff. It's like we hike for a day, then we do some rock climbing... Then, we hike back. Gonna be fun.

TONY

Where you staying?

ANTHONY

We're camping.

TONY

Oh.

(A moment.)

ANTHONY

What?

TONY

Nothing... I ain't climbed in years. I didn't know you climbed.

ANTHONY

Yeah.

TONY

Peter climb with you?

ANTHONY

Technically... I've never did it before.

TONY

Why you doing advanced?

ANTHONY

I worked out all summer. Fifteen pounds! I never gained fifteen pounds like that. Not even when I tried tennis.

TONY

In one summer?

ANTHONY

Yeah, I think I'm pretty athletic now. I could probably join the track team now if I learned how to run.

TONY

You don't seem like the hiking type.

ANTHONY

I figured give it a shot. Between me and you, I don't do the woods.

TONY

And, you camping...?

ANTHONY

Yeah, I can do it if that's what you're saying. I'm rugged.

TONY

You realize you're gonna have to take dumps in the woods?

ANTHONY

There are bathrooms.

TONY

I betcha there ain't no bathrooms, you goan be in the woods. I'mTryingToTellYa.

(A moment.)

ANTHONY

*(Retrieving a pack of information.)*

No. I think there are... I don't know why there wouldn't be.

(Beat.)

TONY

Lemme see.

(TONY flips through the papers. He starts laughing.)

Fifteen miles? You hiking fifteen miles and this your first time. Boy...

ANTHONY

I think we can use it at the ski slope.

TONY

Ain't no bathroom on a ski slope.

ANTHONY

Don't people who ski need bathrooms; thank you?

TONY

Not when they're coming down a slope. They do that mess at the lodge. You ain't staying at the lodge. You camping at the top of a slope. *(Beat.)* You'll be fine. If you gotta go, you gotta go. Don't hold it in and make yourself sick. Everybody gotta doo-doo. Best come to grips with that now. Whatever you do, make sure you don't use a poisonous leaf on your behind. Oooo, that would huuuuuurt!

ANTHONY

Whatever.

*(ANTHONY tries the car again.)*

TONY

Pop that hood.

*(TONY looks under the hood.)*

Geeeee, man, what happened?!

ANTHONY

See, what had happened was... I drove into a ditch.

TONY

Somebody need ta take a look at this!

ANTHONY

Aren't you a trucker?

TONY

*(Looking in the glove compartment.)*

Drive'em; don't fix'em.

ANTHONY

What are you doing?

TONY

Fixing to call Triple A; what chu think?! ‘Don’t wanna be stuck out here all day! We all up in the woods and I’m hungry! Wait turn that up.

(ANTHONY turns up the music.  
TONY’s favorite Disco/Funk song plays  
on the radio.)

You know this?

ANTHONY

No.

(TONY turns it up louder. He pulls  
ANTHONY out of the car.)

What’s going on?!

TONY

This my song.

(TONY dances to one of his favorite  
songs. He pops like the *The  
Campbellockers*.)

Come on, Anthony, YouKnowHowTaDance.

ANTHONY

We in the woods.

TONY

So? Let’s dance, *yeah* [*The Michael Jackson “Yeah.”*]!

(TONY teaches ANTHONY the dance.  
ANTHONY isn’t any good, but gives it a  
shot eventually. Ad-lib and improv as  
much as necessary to have fun.)

Go like this... Uh, huh. And, then... Yeah. And, then you just. (*Beat.*) Ooooh... Get it, now! Watch out, watch out. Get it! Soul Train Line.

(TONY comes down the Soul Train Line.)

Soooooooooooooul Train! Chu! Chu!

(ANTHONY comes down the Soul Train Line.)

Ahhhhh! Go, Anthony! Go, Anthony! Go, Anthony! Go, go, go, Anthony.

(They try doing the dance together, kind of like a routine. ANTHONY gets a little too into it even though he's not that good. He accidently knocks TONY over.)

I'm sorry-I'm sorry, dude.

ANTHONY

(He turns down the music. TONY's laughing his ass off and pointing.)

What?

“What?” You!

TONY

What?

ANTHONY

(*Barely breathing.*)  
You can't dance, this is too funny... My son can't dance. The cutest things I've ever seen in my life...!

TONY

(*Doing a move.*)  
I can dance.

ANTHONY

(*Laughing so hard he can't breathe.*)  
Please, please, stop, I can't breathe. I ain't never seen nothing that funny. Dance like a White boy.

TONY

ANTHONY

I'm a soul brother; I ain't White.

TONY

Shole dance like you is.

(TONY mocks ANTHONY and laughs.)

Don't worry. Some gal'll find that cute and give you some for it. If there's one thing in this world I want for you... It's to dance. White man can't dance. But, you, my brother can dance. It come from your soul. All you gotta do is hear the music and start moving your hips. Own it.

ANTHONY

I'm not a dancer.

TONY

Nah, but you got soul. Don't ever forget that. Don't ever sell that. That's all a Black man got left.

ANTHONY

Should we call Triple A? We can play catch while we wait.

TONY

Yeah.

(ANTHONY pulls out the football. It still has the package. Silence.)

Lemme get the number.

(TONY goes into the glove compartment. Beat.)

What are these [*Caffeine pills.*]?

ANTHONY

Just some caffeine.

TONY

You take'em?

ANTHONY

Sometimes.

TONY

A lot?

ANTHONY

Sometimes a couple a day.

TONY

I'm a trucker and I only take 'em every once and a while.

ANTHONY

I need them.

TONY

That's why you never sleep.

ANTHONY

I sleep.

TONY

I've never seen someone stay up as long as you do. You didn't sleep but a little bit last night, I know cause you kept me up.

ANTHONY

Sorry.

TONY

Don't [*doesn't*] bother me, but... You do what you want. I can't tell you nothing.

(Silence.)

You always toss and turn like that when you sleep?

ANTHONY

I don't know; I'm sleep.

TONY

Girl ain't never told you, you was tossing and turning?

(A moment.)

You a virgin?!

ANTHONY

Yeah, of course!

TONY

Oh, excuse me then. *(Beat.)* What you be dreaming about?

ANTHONY

Nothing.

TONY

You dreaming 'bout something, mmmhmm.

ANTHONY

I don't wanna talk about it.

TONY

You was sweating like you had a fever. I felt your pulse too; YourHeartWasRacing.

ANTHONY

Why you touching me while I'm sleep; that's creepy!

TONY

Cause you kept elbowing folks in the face, and, you took my blanket!

*(Silence.)*

ANTHONY

Don't make fun of me for... I. I have nightmares. It's not like I'm scared of something... Just don't feel like dealing with them.

TONY

I wouldn't make fun of you for that.

*(Rest.)*

You always take'em I bet.

*(Beat.)*

ANTHONY

When my Mom was sick, I used to stay up and watch her.

TONY

You addicted?

(Silence.)

ANTHONY

I wouldn't say that.

TONY

Well, you won't need 'em today. I want you to get some rest. I'll drive. You sleep, OK? (*Beat.*) I'm here. Would that make it easier?

(A moment that lasts forever.)

ANTHONY

Yeah, I think so.

TONY

Then, no problem.

(TONY grabs the Triple A card and dials. Silence for a few beats. ANTHONY tries the ignition.)

[*In the phone.*] Hello...?

ANTHONY

Come on, Peaches.

(ANTHONY gets the car started.)

TONY

Well, wouldya look at that?

(TONY hangs up. They smile at each other.)

6.

(In Hanover, NH. TONY drives. Eventually, he speaks.)

TONY

Have a good nap?

ANTHONY  
Yeah. Best sleep ever.

TONY  
Good... This clock off. What time is it?

ANTHONY  
Quarter past seven. We're here?!

TONY  
Yup.

ANTHONY  
That's cool. Are they kayaking?

TONY  
Rowing. You should try it. You'd like it... These folks got some money. How much it cost to go to this school?

ANTHONY  
About fifty.

TONY  
Fifty thousand?

ANTHONY  
Every year.

TONY  
How you supposed to pay for that? That's two hundred thousand dollars for four years.

ANTHONY  
Financial aid. I got some loans.

TONY  
That's more than my house! That's why there's all these White folks... What you say the colors of this school was?

ANTHONY  
Green and White.

TONY

I can see why: Money and White folk. (*Beat.*) I know White folk. I was in the army. I know how it get when it's a whole lotta them and only a couple of you. Don't let 'em fuck with your mind, understand...? I'm gonna help pay for this... I had no idea you was coming to a school like this.

(Silence.)

ANTHONY

I'm supposed to check in with security, so they can let me in my room early.

TONY

You sure about that.

ANTHONY

That's what the paper says.

TONY

This where people get killed. All up in the mountains... You know you black, right? This crazy!

ANTHONY

I'm supposed to go to the dorm. [*Using at a map.*] Go down Tuck Drive.

TONY

Where's that?

ANTHONY

Keep going down here... Oh, wow! That's a library?

TONY

Look like 'a temple.

ANTHONY

I really like it.

TONY

Prolly where they kill folks. Mmmhmm.  
...So... Which way?

ANTHONY

Go right and then make that quick left. (*Beat. Beat.*) And, you see right here, you're gonna go to the left—

TONY

Why you so nervous?

ANTHONY

I'm not nervous.

TONY

What's that girl doing? Wearing the same clothes she had on last night. I betchu! Look-at-her-look-at-her-look-at-her... Mmm-hmm... All drunk.

ANTHONY

It's seven in the morning. She's not drunk.

TONY

Look like it to me; you gonna have a good time here.

ANTHONY

*(Stone cold serious.)*  
This is serious, shut! Up!

*(Silence.)*

TONY

Don't tell me to shut up, Anthony.

ANTHONY

You're making fun of my school, so shut up.

TONY

NobodyMakingFun of Dar-muff.

ANTHONY

It's Dartmouth! *(Beat.)* Go down this way!

TONY

Why you trying to spoil this?

ANTHONY

I'm not spoiling it! You are! Talking 'bout folks' school. You'd never get into a place like this. This is Ivy League. Do you even know how hard I worked to get here? And, the first thing you do is make fun of everything I worked for.

TONY

I ain't making fun of you. Stop being so dramatic!

ANTHONY

I'm not being dramatic!

TONY

I'm trying! I! Never mind. Whatever.

(Silence.)

ANTHONY

It's that one!

TONY

Great! Looks like an awesome! Dorm!

(TONY parks and gets out. He grabs something and walks away. ANTHONY gets out.)

ANTHONY

Where you going, Tony?!

TONY

We been in the car too long, I need a walk!

ANTHONY

Well, how about we haven't been in the car long enough?! How about you can't walk away from me anymore? You have to listen to everything I have to say because you suck!

TONY

You better shut your mouth.

ANTHONY

You don't scare me. I'm not "Bella." You're not gonna hit me and get away with it.

TONY

I'm not gonna hit you.  
(*Beat.*) Whatever.

ANTHONY

You think that, you got another thing coming.

ANTHONY

Yeah...! Keep walking, Tony, yeah, whatever.

TONY

You know what?! You got some problems!

ANTHONY

You made them!

TONY

I don't owe you a damn thing. You a grown ass man. You eighteen years old.

ANTHONY

Age don't make you a man. You're living proof of that. So, why don't you just take a hike?

TONY

You know what? (*Beat.*) Let's start over.

(Silence.)

This school is really nice, and. I'm proud of you.

ANTHONY

It doesn't work like that! You can't turn back time!

TONY

I apologize, then.

ANTHONY

No. No. You don't get to apologize to me.

TONY

This doesn't have to be hard. It doesn't have to be this hard for us to get to know each other.

ANTHONY

I don't wanna get to know you.

TONY

You don't mean that.

ANTHONY

I'm done with this.

TONY

Anthony. I'm not perfect.

ANTHONY

You're not gonna break me!

TONY

WhatChuTalkingBout.

ANTHONY

I'm not gonna let you do that to me.

ANTHONY

You can't waltz in and out of my life whenever the hell you want! You can't walk away from me just 'cause you're tired! You're never gonna be my dad. Peter is my dad. And as much as he sucks. I mean he doesn't even like me. We don't even get along! But, he provides. He makes sure I'm alright. Peter provides no matter how sick of me he is! Always gonna. And, that's what counts. I've never worried about him walking away from me because I did something. I never wished he'd die...

(A moment.)

So, go take your hike! Take it and don't look back 'cause that's what you're good at!

(ANTHONY knocks that something out of TONY's hand. It falls to the ground. It's everywhere. It's coke.)

What the fuck?! You traveling with drugs in my mutha fuckin car? What if we got stopped? (*Beat.*) Get your shit! And, go. I hate you.

(TONY grabs his shit and washes his hands clean. He walks away. Perhaps forever. He turns.)

TONY

I'm sorry.

(TONY continues to walk away. He throws the coke all away. Silence. He doesn't turn around. He continues to walk away. He becomes a shadow.)

7.

(Heaven. The celestial school song, sang by one of the A Cappella groups. Beer is showered over ANTHONY by JEFF. It's a frat basement. ANTHONY and JEFF are plastered. ANTHONY should adlib.)

JEFF

Anthony. As your big brother, I hereby endow you with the name: The Gutter! To receive this honor, take this cup. Fore this is my body.

(ANTHONY drinks the cup of beer while  
JEFF chants.)

Chug, chug, chug a lug! Yeah! (*Beat.*) Take this cup. Fore this is my blood.

(ANTHONY drinks the cup of beer while  
JEFF chants.)

Chug, chug, chug a lug! And, take these cups [*Handing him three cups.*] because Scooter the Pooter said so! Fuck! I said my name.

(JEFF downs a cup while ANTHONY  
drinks each of his cups. It's hard.  
Believe you me. But it can be done.)

[*Repeat until Anthony's finished.*]  
Chug, chug, chug a lug!

ANTHONY

Fuck!

(JEFF changes the music and sets up  
pong.)

JEFF

Dude, remember the Persian?

ANTHONY

Oh God!

JEFF & ANTHONY

"Persian...! Do not shit in the trash can!"

JEFF

That was the biggest party foul. Don't pledge with prune juice! Pledge with mutha fucking beer! Let's play pong. This is like prime pong playing time. Everybody's gone home for Christmas. When are you leaving?

ANTHONY

I'm staying here.

JEFF

Duuuuuuude... That fucking sucks ass hard.

ANTHONY

I'll be fine.

(They play pong.)

JEFF

Did you like see that girl the other night? She was so into me, man. (*Beat.*) I hate that bitch. I thought she came back for more 'cause I fucking rocked her shit on Wednesday, man... Freshmen bitches... Like, my first year here, I was like. All about the work. I missed out on the first two quarters. I coulda been drinking, but I was up in the library. (*Beat.*) That was so stupid of me... (*Beat.*) You know you can call me over break if you need to man... I'm not gonna be doing nothing but chilling with the fam and hanging with losers from high school.

ANTHONY

Yeah, man, I'm gonna be fine.

JEFF

You doing Crew next quarter? It's hard cause I know they start all early and shit. We don't get done here 'til late. And, I know The Gutter isn't gonna be a lame ass brother.

ANTHONY

I handled it before.

JEFF

That's my, nigga. But, I'm saying, like. We hang out 'til like really late. I mean, but you don't have to, it's your choice, I mean, you gotta find a balance, it just happens my balance tips a little this way.

ANTHONY

I'm so glad this quarter is over, man.

JEFF

How'd your finals go?

ANTHONY

I think I rocked them hard. My chem final was pretty tough because the fucking professor's an asshole. He teaches us general chemistry, but he tests us on physical chemistry. Even after we complained about the first midterm! Not one of us got over fifty points on the last exam. And! For stupid ass neurobiology. I had to memorize over two hundred slides for the test. Stressed, man.

JEFF

Dang... I'm glad I'm about to graduate.

ANTHONY

So glad I took Lit. We just had a paper.

(Silence.)

JEFF

Fuck it. I gotta ask. We're cool. You my nigga, right?

ANTHONY

You my nigga, so I'm your nigga, man.

JEFF

Fuck it. Remember that paper I tutored you on last year at the Composition Center?

ANTHONY

Which one?

JEFF

That first class. That one you wrote about Affirmative Action and Diversity in the work place.

ANTHONY

Oh... in: *Race, Politics, and Law!*

JEFF

Yeah!

ANTHONY

I hated that professor. He told me my writing basically sucked.

JEFF

Like my job there is not to have an opinion about what I'm reading. I'm just supposed to help you articulate, articulate what you're trying to say. But, like then we became friends and stuff. But, I'm not sure what you think of me because I'm like the guilty

White person you are talking about in your paper. I caught emotions reading your shit, man.

ANTHONY

That's what the class was about.

JEFF

But, you made some big fucking statements, *bro*.

ANTHONY

Jeff. Man. I wasn't talking about you in particular.

JEFF

But, do you actually believe that shit?

ANTHONY

I don't think it's shit... Because I'm Black, it's seen as a predisposition to failure. Our society set it up like that. I mean, come on. It's clear I can do the work. It's clear I know what I'm doing. I'm summa cum laude. But, because I'm not White I have to fight harder. And, that's where it's not fair.

JEFF

I don't agree. Now, your family. If they're failures, then you've gotta higher likelihood of being a failure. Just because you're Black? Yeah, no. Blackness doesn't preset you up for failure. Why would you pick this frat if you believe in all this Black shit?

ANTHONY

I like the people.

JEFF

But, dude, you're so Black.

ANTHONY

That just tells you how big my dick is, bitch.

(ANTHONY laughs. JEFF doesn't find that funny at all. Silence.)

JEFF

But, I feel. If you're as smart as White people, prove it. If you're not a failure... Prove it. Like everybody else has to. I don't think you should use the handout if you're really equal.

ANTHONY

What are you trying to say?

JEFF

I'm asking: how big is your brain, not how big is your dick. What'd you get on your SAT?

(A moment.)

ANTHONY

I don't have to tell you.

JEFF

Totally what I thought. I mean it's cool. If I was Black, I'd use the crutch too.

ANTHONY

I got a fourteen-sixty.

JEFF

See? I got a thirteen-ninety. So, let's say for argument's sake. You're smarter than me.

ANTHONY

There's no argument there. I totally scored higher than you.

JEFF

OK. Whatever, man. What I'm saying is... You still checked the box.

ANTHONY

Yeah of course. I'm proud of who I am.

JEFF

I'm not saying that! I'm saying. Like you said shit like White people were evil.

ANTHONY

I didn't say White people were evil. I said, they have power. I said racism depends solely! On power and prejudice. The ability to make large social impacts based on a group's prejudices that limits another group. Dude, I don't wanna talk about this--

JEFF

Yeah, but what you were saying is that all White people are racist! You're the one buying into it, you're the one who's wrong. Man, one day somebody's gonna teach you that.

(A moment.)

ANTHONY

Let's just play.

JEFF

But, you like White people?

ANTHONY

God! Not every one of them.

JEFF

See! See!

ANTHONY

I don't like all Black people either.

JEFF

You're gonna be the only one in the house, man. And, then. You let us call you nigga.

ANTHONY

It's just a word.

JEFF

Well, ya fucking sang that song.

ANTHONY

You guys made me do it!

JEFF

Why would you join if your brothers would make you sing the Sambo song?

ANTHONY

*(Sarcastically.)*

Oh, I really enjoyed it. Highlight of my Dartmouth Experience.

JEFF

What could you want so much that you'd do that? Wouldn't you say that's enough? Or, something. Like, "You guys are crossing boundaries?"

ANTHONY

Look, man. It's over. I had to do it. I don't see the big deal. They're just words. I sang'em. And, now I'm a brother.

(Silence as they play pong.)

Cause I guess I just needed to get in at first. I'm doing what I know I have to do to get what I want.

JEFF

What do you want? It's obvious you don't really wanna be a neurosurgeon. You don't even enjoy the classes.

ANTHONY

So? I'm acing them. How many Black neurosurgeons do you know...? Exactly. My being a neurosurgeon will show people that no matter where you come from or what you've gone through, you can do whatever you put your mind to. It'll show *your* people that things need to be available for others. Yes! There needs to be Affirmative Action. So, there! That's why I fucking joined.

JEFF

That's not how you change minds. I think Affirmative Action is an unfair advantage. I know that White people are powerful. I think special programs for Diversity are just new tools by White people to control minorities. And, it's a good one. You didn't change my mind, not even a little bit, and I read your damn essay! I think you should know that. (*Beat.*) I think you got into school because you're Black [*Anthony attempts to interrupt.*]. Even though! Even though you got a better score than me. I think that's how you'll get your first job; I think it's total bullshit. I think whatever you end up doing, you'll still depend on White people to OK it for you. It's always gonna be a White guy picking up your tab. I mean, I have to pay for your frat dues... You didn't know? That's how financial aid works in this house. You're the first guy here who needs financial aid. Somebody's gotta pay for you. And, that somebody is me because I brought you in. You're always be Black Sambo even though I know you can do almost anything you want, but you're willing to throw it all away, sell your soul to prove a point... [*He shrugs.*] (*Beat.*) And. The people's minds you wanna change are not gonna change just because you do something that your heart's not into. Now if I were you, I'd figure out how I could become the most powerful person I could be. Something that I'm passionate about. And, if you get there without the crutch, the more respect you can command. The ability to say, "Yes," to something and then make it like happen is power.

ANTHONY

Yeah, whatever. .You're just pissed because everybody and their mama got a job but you... Ya fucking gotta wait another year for the good ones to roll around. Don't fucking take that shit out on me, man. (*Beat.*) We cool?

(Silence.)

JEFF

It's cool. (*Beat.*) You my nigger, right?

(A moment.)

ANTHONY

Yeah. I'm your *nigga*, dude.

JEFF

As your big brother, I command you to sing for me.

ANTHONY

You fuckin with me.

JEFF

I wanna see you sing, Black Sambo. Do it. Or, you're out.

ANTHONY

Come on, man. I'm not gonna do it.

JEFF

Sing or I'll let your poor ass. Pay your frat dues on your own.

ANTHONY

Jeff... Man. We're friends.

JEFF

You wanna be here or not?

(A moment.)

Prove it.

ANTHONY

Jeff... Man. Let's just play pong.

JEFF

We both know the game we're playing. So, sing.

(Silence. He gives ANTHONY a handle of opened gin. ANTHONY takes it to the head as he sings)

ANTHONY

*(Defiantly.)*

IN TENNESSEE AS I'VE HEARD SAY  
THERE ONCE DID USED TO DWELL  
A FINE OLD COLOR'D GENTLEMAN  
AND THIS NIGGER KNOW'D HIM WELL;

DEY USED TO CALL HIM SAMBO  
OR SOMETHIN' NEAR DE SAME,  
AND DE REASON WHY DEY CALL'D HIM SO  
WAS BECAUSE IT WAS HIS NAME.

O HE COULD JUMP AND RUN A RACE  
AND DO A LITTLE HOPPIN',  
AND WHEN HE GOT A GOIN' FAST  
DE DEVIL COULDN'T STOP HIM.

OLD AGE COME ON, HIS TEETH DROPP'D OUT,  
IT MADE NO ODDS TO HIM;  
HE EAT AS MANY TATERS  
AND HE DRINK AS MANY GIN;

O SAMBO WAS A GENTLEMAN,  
ONE OF DE OLDEST KIND.

(ANTHONY and JEFF exchange a look.  
Yeah, that just happened.)

JEFF

Merry Christmas.

(JEFF takes a shot.)

## ACT II

## 1.

(ANTHONY's memory of his mother is scratched.)

## ANTHONY

*(As his mother Annabelle. To the audience. The audience is Anthony/Tony.)*

These drugs ain't gonna do nothing but continue to destroy your life! If you decide to get clean, come and join us, but. [*ANTHONY mouths words for a beat. We can't hear Bella. It's like CD skipping.*] (A moment.) Just. Act like it never happened... It'll be fine. [*ANTHONY mouths words for a beat.*] Just dance with me one mo' time before I go. (*Beat.*) Well, fine, nigga! You just gonna let me walk away and not even try to do better?! Keep acting like you don't hear me. [*ANTHONY mouths words for a beat.*] Well, guess what, nigga? [*ANTHONY mouths words for a beat.*] Our bags are packed. My girlfriend's gonna take us to the airport. Come on, y'all...! I said come on, Junior... I ain't hurting him. Junior! Get off that floor before I whip you! I'm not playing with you. That doesn't sound like me. [*ANTHONY mouths words for a beat.*] He used to snort that coke. I told'em he need to quit! Y'all didn't need to be 'round that. He chose that cocaine over us, and. [*ANTHONY mouths words for a beat.*] Cleaning up everything like he a kid! Promise me you'll turn out like him. (*A moment.*) You are going to forget who you are. [*ANTHONY mouths words for a beat.*] You don't love me, Anthony. I'm your mother! [*ANTHONY mouths words for a beat.*] Don't sell yourself short. I'm going to die. Don't lose your light. Glioblastoma Multiforme... Be who you are. [*ANTHONY mouths words for a beat.*] Don't disappoint me. Don't be afraid of forgetting me. Proud. I'm. [*ANTHONY mouths words for a beat.*] Life is. [*ANTHONY mouths words for a beat.*] Nightmare.

(ANTHONY mouths words. He's still Bella, but we can't hear anything. Bella fades away. Darkness. The only time in this play for a complete blackout, other than the first Act break. Silence.)

## 2.

(Time has passed. On the stoop of a frat in Hanover, NH. ANTHONY smokes cigarettes every opportunity he gets. ANTHONY's figuring out his life. Eventually, TONY, at his wits end, enters. He's looking like a million bucks. He's all kinds of cleaned up. Inside and

out. He sees ANTHONY. Finally...)

TONY

Anthony...? I've looked everywhere for you.

ANTHONY

Hi.

TONY

"Hi?" I drove all the way from North Carolina for your graduation and you don't even make the effort to see me. You got my messages.

ANTHONY

Been kinda busy, but I don't think you'd understand that, Tony.

TONY

If you didn't want me to come, you could've just said it.

(Silence.)

ANTHONY

Hi'ya been...? You're looking pretty good there, Tony.

TONY

I'm disappointed in you.

ANTHONY

You don't know me. You can't be disappointed in me.

TONY

You're grown now.

ANTHONY

No thanks to you. Gosh, I'm already so bored with this. Not today, not today!

TONY

I love you. There's not a day that goes by that I don't think about you.

ANTHONY

You can do better than that, Tony... Come on, man, *you*... [*Patronizing.*] You write letters. You drop folks off at school... That's how you roll, dawg... Send me a damn box of books because it makes up for lost time... [*To himself.*] Fuuuuuck, I'm not this person.

TONY

My intention is to show you I care.

ANTHONY

You're one of those people... Look. I don't care about your intentions. Hell, I don't even care about you. What I care about are results. You shot a blank on my life. Ya never followed through except when you were in prison and lonely as hell, and writing me was a way to kill time. That's all I was right...? Right?

TONY

No.

ANTHONY

Paaleeease... There ain't much more to do in prison but have jerk off contests with the fellas!

TONY

Who are you?!

ANTHONY

I don't know...! That's the point! I have no fucking idea!

TONY

I didn't come here for you to shit on me.

ANTHONY

Well, you took a steaming hot shit on my life... WhatDidYouComeHereFor?

TONY

I wanted to see you, but not, like, this.

ANTHONY

Like what. Because I tell ya, Tony, this is the real deal. There's no grab-assing and lollipops to my game. This is me. I'm twenty-fucking-two years old. Twenty-two. You're only forty. You've missed all of my life and I've missed more than half of yours. Does something about that not add up to you either? I'm not the bad guy here. You had me. I didn't have you. I don't owe you a damn thing.

TONY

I don't owe you anything either.

ANTHONY

Forget it... We keep saying the same old things. Keep going around and around the same issues. For what? I wanna feel something different, but I can't.

TONY

What do you wanna feel?

ANTHONY

Something other than helpless. I'd give anything to feel hate or love. Indifference-guilt, fuck, anything! Anything other than helpless. Because I'm not. What we've got is broken. Doesn't seem to be a way to fix it. Don't you feel the same thing?

(A moment.)

Every time I see you I think, "Hey! This time is gonna be different. This time I'm gonna feel like I understand it all." But, then. Ya know? It's us. We're not Theo and Bill Huxtable. Together we make sludge. That's the one thing we're good at together. And, there's nothing we're ever gonna have between us but this thick ass layer of sludge. And, we can both dig at it for the rest of our lives. In our different ways. But, under each layer of sludge will be more sludge. Maybe a different color, a different smell. We'll never feel anything different. We'll never be anything different. So, what's the point of trying anymore? It's the same thing. It's insane, man.

TONY

We can do better. I've got myself together. I want a relationship now. Your mother didn't want me around.

ANTHONY

Don't blame her. You're responsible for your own decisions... Never mind. You don't get it.

TONY

Get what?

ANTHONY

It's too complicated. I understand you're not swift enough to think on things more complicated than sticking your cock in a girl and getting her preggo... Enjoy the ride back to North Carolina.

TONY

Why do you have to just shut down?!

ANTHONY

Because you're out of time! It's too late. I don't need anything from you; I'm completely self-sufficient; I'm a fucking godsend to Earth and you fucking missed out.

TONY

It's never too late.

ANTHONY

That's your problem. You think there's all this extra time in the world and you can... eventually get to it. You can't eventually get to me.

TONY

You don't know anything about me, man.

ANTHONY

Oh, I know how you enthralled her... How y'all got so caught up, ya thought, "Hey, it's a good idea to fuck raw style in the mud on the Army Confidence Course." And, then, poof! She's pregnant. Poof! Let's get married.

TONY

I loved her.

ANTHONY

Yeah...

TONY

We both was young.

ANTHONY

And, you hit her.

TONY

She always hit me first.

ANTHONY

This ain't preschool.

TONY

She hit me more than I ever hit her!

ANTHONY

Not true.

TONY

Yes it is. You're basing everything on a second hand account.

ANTHONY

No, on first hand account; I was there.

TONY

You don't know what you're talking about!

(Silence.)

When people are high they do bad things to each other!

(A moment.)

ANTHONY

I remember playing with my toy soldiers underneath the kitchen bar! You both were in the kitchen fighting! She was pregnant with Kendra! Pregnant...!

TONY

You're not getting it. Bella wasn't a saint. You don't know the story.

ANTHONY

What's there to know? Tell me. Ya forcing me to piece shit together.

TONY

Maybe Kendra ain't mine! Need me to spell it out...? Maybe Bella was so coked up, she didn't know who she was sleeping with. Ever thought about that?

ANTHONY

What? She didn't do drugs. Never—

TONY

I'm saying. She made at least one mistake to feed a habit. And, from the time I saw Kendra when I picked you up to go to school, I've known, beyond a shadow of a doubt she wasn't mine. I ain't never judged Bella for that White dude cause I think it was part my fault.

ANTHONY

I don't believe you.

TONY

I have a reason to lie about that?

ANTHONY

Excuse me.

TONY

Don't walk away, Anthony. We need to talk this out, so at least you have the truth.

ANTHONY

It's garbage. See, I'm totally content without you. Then, you unload truckloads of garbage on me. And, you know. I'm a happy person. For the most part I am. People walk up to me and sometimes ask me why I'm so happy. I wonder the same shit: Why do I find sunshine in funky ass places? I don't question it. I don't know why I'm happy. My life sucks. I have nothing to really be happy about. You don't even know five percent about me. You don't know what I've been through. You don't care who I've had to fight. How I've had to protect myself. You don't know what my childhood was like. What if something really terrible happened to me... and the person who's supposed to protect me from the terrible monsters and demons... was the monster in my closet...? It's just on some days I feel sad. Only some days I get scared of what I might become or why I'm made like this. Only for a little while. Then, I'm happy again. I know that doesn't make much sense—

TONY

I follow you—

ANTHONY

No, give me a second. Let me think.

(A long moment at ANTHONY thinks.)

What I'm trying to say is: I'm happy for the most part... It seems to me. That. Ok... Evidently, you don't want me.

TONY

That's not—

ANTHONY

No-no-no, let me finish. All I'm saying is that the evidence makes me believe you don't want me and, hey, that's fine, I'm cool with that. So, the one thing I want from you is to leave me alone... Because I'm good. Hey! [*He's definitely smiling by now.*] I'm gonna make it. So... Here's what I'm gonna do for you. I'm giving you a Get Out of Jail Free card. OK? Just forget I exist. It's not your fault at all. You tried to fix the relationship. I applaud you. I really do.

(A moment.)

Erase me. Forget about me, please, 'cause I'm gonna forget about you.

TONY

For as long as you live! You will be my son! You gonna have to fight me for that!

ANTHONY

Have a safe trip back. I truly wish you well. With everything.

(They handshake... TONY doesn't let go.)

TONY

You're just like your mother.

(Beat.)

ANTHONY

Let go.

TONY

No.

ANTHONY

Let go. *(Beat.)* Lemme go!

(ANTHONY tries to fight his Dad off, but he can't.)

TONY

I'm not going no where.

(TONY lets him go. It's a basketball game. ANTHONY tries to get by, but TONY keeps blocking him.)

Why didn't I hear your name?

(A moment. It stops the game.)

The walk. I didn't hear your name.

(A moment.)

Did you graduate?

(Silence.)

Did you graduate?!

ANTHONY

It's none of your business.

(Silence.)

I'm sorry you came all the way up here, but you did that on your own, I didn't tell you to come, I didn't tell you nothing.

(A moment.)

Look. I'm taking some time off, alright? I've been living with my brothers. I'm waiting 'til the Fall. Then, I'll just do two quarters and get the fuck outta here.

TONY

You got kicked out?

ANTHONY

Just taking some time.

TONY

For what...?

ANTHONY

Don't. I fucking feel bad about this shit already. All my mom wanted me to do was go to school. And I'm fucking it up.

TONY

Why you think that?

ANTHONY

Cause I am. I don't wanna talk about it.

(Rest.)

TONY

What you studying then?

ANTHONY

I'm an Econ guy.

TONY

What that mean?

ANTHONY

Economics major... I study markets and money.

TONY

You don't write no more?

ANTHONY

Nope. Not interested in it anymore. I mean, I'm working on a novel, but I haven't looked at it in a year. Don't have the time. It's not good anyways.

TONY

You still having nightmares?

ANTHONY

Sometimes... But, mostly when I dream, I dream of a black space.

(A moment.)

TONY

Sometimes you gotta clear everything out ya system to get right down to what you's dealing with inside... You drinking a lot?

ANTHONY

It's normal here. The founder of AA was a Dartmouth Alum, so...

(Silence.)

TONY

This isn't you, Anthony. You do adventures and love to have fun. You may not know you're a writer, but you're a writer. You need some time to gather yourself back up. Figure out what you want in life. *(Beat.)* I think you need some time away. What you think about taking a break from this whole life?

ANTHONY

I can't afford that.

TONY

You wanna live with me for a while?

(A moment.)

I gotta room for you if you want it. Give you the time you need to finish the novel, give you a chance to rest up for that Fall semester.

ANTHONY

Quarter—

TONY

Quarter?

ANTHONY

We're on the quarter system—

TONY

OK. Quarter. (*Silence.*) The only thing I'd ask is that you don't drink and help with taking the trash out. Wash dishes sometime. You know, nothing crazy. I just don't have no drinking or drugs in the house. That's part of my plan to stay clean. Been clean a little over two years... Everybody needs a chance to gather themselves at some point. Ain't nothing to be ashamed of.

ANTHONY

Nah. I don't think so.

TONY

(*At the top of his lungs.*)

Everybody need help at some point! We can't make it alone in this world! Don't be so god damn arrogant! Anthony! I'm begging you! I'll take care of you. OK? I promise. You won't want for nothing. It's my fault. OK? I gotta fix this. I broke us. Not you.

(A moment.)

ANTHONY

When do you need to know?

TONY

I got time.

3.

(In Tony's Living Room. Remnants of a meal set on TV stands. Time has passed. TONY and ANTHONY are wrestling. TONY and ANTHONY adlib: "Come on, now;" "What you got;" "I'm gonna pin you;" "I ain't scared;" "You scared;" "Nah, you scared;" etc. They're having a great time. Lots of laughs and screams. After a while, TONY pins ANTHONY and starts pinching him.)

ANTHONY

*(Screaming and laughing.)*

Ah, that's not fair, that's not fair! You cheating. Ah, that's my butt, stop pinching my butt! Help! Somebody! Ah!

(TONY starts tickling ANTHONY. ANTHONY is the most ticklish person in the world.)

TONY

You ticklish!

ANTHONY

Ah! I'm gonna pee on myself! Stop! Stop! I can't breathe! Please. I'm gonna pee on myself!

(TONY stops. ANTHONY tries to tickle TONY, so TONY tickles ANTHONY to death. End of play... Just kidding. They get up.)

TONY

I think I won.

(DAN walks in from the shower in a tattered, ugly towel from twenty years ago. It barely holds his junk. He's holding out a check.)

ANTHONY

No, I so won.

DAN

*(Handing Tony a check.)*

Here ya go, Tony, I'm real sorry 'bout dat, man.

TONY

You coulda waited 'til you had some clothes on!

DAN

Oh, nah, it ain't no problem. Notta pro'lem at all. This yo' son youwa tellin me 'bout?

TONY

Yup.

DAN

I was real curious. Couldn't wait to see what ya looked like... You a lucky man, you don't look a thing like your daddy. What your name is? "Junior?"

ANTHONY

No. I'm Anthony.

*(DAN holds out his hand and accidentally drops his towel, he may catch it in the knick of time.)*

DAN

Whoops! Too soon for that!

TONY

Man, go put some clothes on.

DAN

I am. My name's Dan. Nice to meet you. [*Sniffing the air.*]

ANTHONY

Nice to meet you too.

DAN

That's some good smelling cologne, man. Let's go for some Cracker Barrel tomorrow. My treat.

TONY

I'm not gonna let you pay.

DAN

Tony, if it's my treat and my money, you're gonna have ta sit there and eat the food or I'll cry. That's the end of the story. I don't want no back talk, now.

ANTHONY

What time tomorrow?

DAN

Maybe 'bout ten.

ANTHONY

You're a truck driver?

DAN

Yeah I do that.

(DAN exits. Awkward... A moment.  
ANTHONY and TONY laugh.)

ANTHONY

Whoa.

TONY

Figured you may not meet'em. He only stay here every coupla months. Sometime he gone for three, four months at a time. He the best subleter. Never here.

ANTHONY

It's just been you and him for how long?

TONY

Years. I keep telling myself I don't need this big house, but. You never know what's gonna happen. Look at it now. All three rooms is full. Who knew? 'Bout three, four years ago, I was with fine ass Shaunelle and her fruity ass son, Spike. We went in on a house cause we was planning to get married. But, me and fruitcake Spike never got along, so she left me. She left me with the house note too. And, I love her, you know. I'm not trying to be mean to nobody. It's got both our names on the house. So, I say do right by her anyway and pay off the house. Don't hurt me none. Never know if you goan get back together. I still see her sometime.

ANTHONY

Meaning?

TONY  
We just friends.

ANTHONY  
“Just friends.”

TONY  
People got needs, man! You want some dessert?

ANTHONY  
You made desert too?

TONY  
Nope! Bought you some mangos at Wal-mart.

ANTHONY  
I love department store mangos!

TONY  
Get me a plate, silly self.

(ANTHONY gets TONY a plate.  
Meanwhile, TONY gets a mango out of  
the bag. He cuts it. ANTHONY gives  
TONY the plate. TONY cuts it into little  
baby pieces. Ah...That’s cute.)

When we was in Panama, we had a mango tree in the front. Everyday when there was fruit, you had to pull a mango from the tree. I’d put you on my shoulders and you’d pull one off the tree. You’d always pick one that wasn’t ripe. But, Bella’d have a ripe mango already cut up inside. You’d get all sticky. Be licking your fingers. Then, you’d try to feed me some of yourOleNastyLeftoverMango you didn’t want. You’d come to me like a little monster with sticky, slobbery fingers put slimy mango in my mouth.

ANTHONY  
And you ate it?

TONY  
Yeah.

ANTHONY  
(*Laughing.*)  
Eeeeeuuuuuh...

TONY

*(Laughing.)*

I had to. It was soooooo funny.

ANTHONY

I did that?

TONY

It's the small tortures that get you through.

*(TONY hands ANTHONY the plate of mango.)*

What you wanna do for the Fourth?

ANTHONY

Just chill.

TONY

We can do Bar-B-Que pulled pork and some corn on the cob. Cornbread...

ANTHONY

Fireworks legal out here?

TONY

As legal as sin, my friend.

ANTHONY

I started writing.

TONY

For real?

ANTHONY

I feel good about it too.

TONY

That's the best news to hear.

ANTHONY

And, getting the best sleep of my life. No nightmares.

TONY

See, I was right about something.

ANTHONY

I feel clear. I'm just writing. Feels great! This is how it's supposed to be. I can't believe I stopped for so long.

TONY

Life get like that sometimes. What the novel about?

ANTHONY

It's a collection of short stories. I wrote one yesterday about. Well, basically about a monster like swamp thing that terrorizes a town, it's not like a movie though... I mean, I guess it is. But, that ain't bad! I may not even use it when I'm finished.

(TONY puts the peels in the trash and starts taking the trash out.)

Oh, don't worry about that, I was just about to take it out.

TONY

I got it. What if this house has alotta ghosts? Or, something like a cursed painting or something that you keep putting out. But, every time you come back, it's inside the house?

(DAN comes back in.)

DAN

Do you have some deodorant I can borrow?

(TONY hands him deodorant.)

TONY

I got ya some right here.

DAN

And some—

(TONY hands him some toothpaste and a toothbrush.)

TONY

Yup!

DAN

Thanks.

(DAN exits. A moment. They laugh.)

TONY

He can drive though! Leave my friend alone...

ANTHONY

What if it's more like the people in the house are ghosts, but they don't know they're ghosts?

TONY

Man, that is a movie. Why don't you write movies?

ANTHONY

Maybe. Right now, though, just trying to write.

TONY

You gonna show me when I come back I know.

ANTHONY

Where you going? Shauneeeelle's house?

TONY

I wish, man. I gotta make some outta state deliveries.

ANTHONY

Where?

TONY

California...

(A moment.)

I know, man.

ANTHONY

How long will you be gone?

TONY

'Bout two, three weeks tops. Think you can manage to keep the house?

ANTHONY

Yeah.

TONY

I don't mind if you get a girl and have her over here; you grown.

ANTHONY

When you heading out?

TONY

Day after tomorra. Not goan be too much traffic.

(A moment.)

What's wrong?

ANTHONY

Nothing.

TONY

Just don't got no more vacation.

ANTHONY

I know.

TONY

*(Laughingly.)*

You prolly want me to go away, so you can find that girl who can keep you company.

ANTHONY

Nah, I don't want you to go.

TONY

I don't wanna go either. We're... [*Having such a good time.*] Here.

(He gives ANTHONY some money.)

ANTHONY

OK... I told you, you can leave that there, I'll take it out after I clean this up.

TONY

Thankya...

(TONY opens something up and pulls out paperbacks.)

ANTHONY  
What you reading?

TONY  
Nothing. Just getting something for the road.

(ANTHONY takes the books from TONY and looks through them.)

ANTHONY  
*The Notebook?*

TONY  
It was written by a man! It's good.

(TONY snatches his books back.)

ANTHONY  
Dude...

TONY  
I'm gonna go hit that sack!

ANTHONY  
(Chuckling.)  
Aiiight.

TONY  
Well, good night!

ANTHONY  
Night.

(TONY exits. ANTHONY takes the trash out. DAN walks out. He's dressed for the bar.)

You're taking off?

DAN  
Just going to the bar. You wanna come? My treat.

ANTHONY  
I gotta get some writing done tonight.

DAN

Next time. (*Beat.*) Well, I'm bout to go blow my money on a coupla pretty ladies! The offer's still open. I sure hope the ladies are.

(ANTHONY has a good laugh to himself.)

ANTHONY

You're out of control, out of control! Whew...! Where you going?

DAN

Pink Cadillac. It's a twenty minute walk from the house. When you step outside, you go left. It's about a mile up the road. You'd see it on the left if ever you wanna go. Don't work too hard nah!

ANTHONY

OK.

DAN

What kinda cologne you wearing?

ANTHONY

Old Spice.

DAN

Can I borrow some?

ANTHONY

Yeah.

(ANTHONY pulls it out his bag and gives it to DAN. DAN may use a little too much of it.)

DAN

I'mma smell good tonight, boy... Thanks.

ANTHONY

Yup.

(DAN exits. ANTHONY sits. He stares into oblivion. Waiting for the spark, the

first word. He paces for a while. He writes something. He scratches it out and closes the journal. He pulls out his wallet. He doesn't open it this time. He throws the journal. A moment. ANTHONY leaves.)

4.

(At Pink Cadillac. ANTHONY and DAN drink. It's karaoke night.)

DAN

Yo stick in the mud Daddy, don't neva wanna come out drinking. He don't do nothing with me when I'm here. He tell you we was in The Service together?

ANTHONY

No.

DAN

I was his superior. I stayed in the military 'til I retired at thirty-eight. It's a good deal. Got that money for the rest of my life. Me and Tony used to party together. He should be here. We could be out at the bar pulling women.

ANTHONY

He has a woman.

DAN

WhoShaunelle? SheLeftHimMoreThanAYearAgo. They don't even talk anymore because he so righteous now. You gotta girl?

ANTHONY

Nah.

DAN

You one of them types with alotta girls?

ANTHONY

Nah.

DAN

I like faggots! (*Beat.*) Most of'em real nice. Nicer'n most normal folks. I gotta brother who a fag, love'em to death. It's OK if you're one.

ANTHONY

I ain't gay!

DAN

I'm so glad you came. I didn't wanna bother nobody, but tonight's a celebration for me. I retired today.

ANTHONY

Congratulations. What are you going to do now?

DAN

*(He's very serious.)*

I'm thinking about becoming a dolphin trainer... Maybe I'll open a business. It's the biggest day of my life and I didn't have nobody to share it with. It's my own fault. People like me just end up in situations. What kind of watch do you have?

*(ANTHONY shows DAN his watch.)*

Oh, take it off, let me look at it.

*(ANTHONY does.)*

Wow... This is a nice watch!

ANTHONY

I need a new one.

DAN

Why?

ANTHONY

It's broke.

DAN

This is an antique! It's worth a lot of money.

ANTHONY

You looking at the same watch I'm looking at?

DAN

This an Oyster Lipton, buddy. Rolex made these watches in World War Two for the Canadian Military. The soldiers who got shipped off got these watches.



OK.

ANTHONY

Want another?

DAN

Uummm... yeah.

ANTHONY

Waiter! (*Beat.*) Maybe I'll be a watchmaker. Tony told me you a writer. And, you go to this really smart school.

DAN

Yeah.

ANTHONY

He so proud of you. He talk about ya practically all the time. Be like: "Shut up, man!"

DAN

Why?

ANTHONY

You know what sucks?! (*Beat.*) Driving... It's the shittiest job. I didn't have any kids. I always wanted a son. And now I'm old. I got a little money. Don't got no where to spend it. Don't really wanna spend it, but who in the Hell would I give it to? You grow up in Church?

DAN

No, why?

ANTHONY

Wondering if you wanna sing Paradise by the Dashboard Light with me.  
 THOUGH IT'S COLD AND LONELY IN THE DEEP DARK NIGHT  
 I CAN SEE PARADISE BY THE DASHBOARD LIGHT

DAN

...I...Don't know that song.

ANTHONY

Oh, come on, it's Meatloaf! GLOWING LIKE THE METAL ON THE EDGE OF A KNIFE!

ANTHONY

*(Not recognizing it still.)*  
Nope.

DAN

Why you down here? Just for the summer?

ANTHONY

I'm taking some time off. Trying to get my head clear and write my novel. Like. I don't know what I wanna do. I feel like I wasted the last four years of my life in school. I mean, I have good grades. I'm sure I can get a job. But, the problem is, I don't know what I want. But, I know I don't want a handout. You feel me? I'm tired of working to get somewhere, and I don't even know where that somewhere is. I feel like you... What's next in my life? You know what I mean?

*(A long silence.)*

DAN

I'm thinking 'bout buying a game! An Xbox or Playstation. Or, one of them Wiis.

ANTHONY

I'm not your man.

DAN

You don't play?

ANTHONY

Never got one.

DAN

I'm gonna have to get you one.

ANTHONY

That would be so freakin awesome! But... But, it wouldn't be right.

DAN

Do me this one solid. I wanna buy something for you because you deserve it.

ANTHONY

I don't deserve anything.

DAN

Yes, you do. I'm a man who can tell when somebody deserves something. And, you deserve a lot. You're a good kid. You're in school and stuff. Doing a helluvaLot more than I ever did. I believe when somebody's trying to make something of

themselves, they should be rewarded, so I'm getting you a game. See if I was a dad, I'd take my kid wherever in the world he wanted to go. He wouldn't have to worry about a thing. That's what a man does. I wish I had a kid. (*Beat.*) You want something to eat...?

(ANTHONY shrugs.)

Waiter! It's my retirement party! Can we get some service?!

5.

(Time has passed. It's late. ANTHONY and DAN play Madden on a SONY PS3 console. They're pretty good at it. Anthony's drinking vodka tonic. He and Dan adlib: "Take that;" "Uh- huh, got something for that ass;" "Yeah;" "Who's the man;" etc. After a while, TONY enters.)

TONY

Hello... Y'all still playing that game?

DAN

Pretty addictive.

ANTHONY

I thought you were supposed to be back tomorrow morning.

TONY

Y'all done played the game all summer.

ANTHONY

(*To the game.*)

Oh...

(*Beat.*)

TONY

How much money you got, Anthony?

DAN

I gave him a couple hundred.

TONY

Dan! We don't need your money, keep your money, man, I can take care of him.

ANTHONY

He was just spotting me. We didn't know when you'd be back. You been basically gone the last two months.

TONY

I didn't ask you all that!

ANTHONY

What's wrong with you?

TONY

Ain't you supposed to be done packed?! Where your bags?

(Silence.)

DAN

Have you played Madden yet, Tony?

TONY

I don't wanna play no Madden, OK?! You should be writing instead a playing that game.

DAN

*(To the game.)*  
Oh, I got you!

ANTHONY

*(To Dan. Referring to Madden.)*  
You fucker!

TONY

I bet you ain't done no writing since I left more than five days ago. This is messed up. I come home. Don't nobody even acknowledge me. You could 'least stop playing the game and say, "Hi."

ANTHONY

I've done some work.

TONY

That's a boldfaced lie!

ANTHONY

Tony! Chill, man... (Coming in here with an attitude.)

DAN

Yeah!

TONY

Dan, you can shut the hell up.

ANTHONY

Why don't you go take a nap? You're always grumpy when you come home. Taking it out on people.

TONY

Bags supposed to be packed, so we can load 'em in the morning and take you to school; I told you.

ANTHONY

*(Laughingly.)*  
Go to sleep, grumpy.

TONY

It's your life! Somebody giving you a chance and you just pissing on it. If that ain't the dumbest thing in the world, I don't know what is.

ANTHONY

Actually... I'm thinking 'bout waiting 'til Winter quarter if that's alright with you.

TONY

No. You gotta get back in school. Ya not writing. Not reading. Not doing nothing while ya down here. Wellst ta just go on back to school. Instead of wallowing like a pig in shit.

ANTHONY

Man, whatever.

(TONY goes off for a beat. He comes back.)

TONY

I ask you to do one thing and you can't do it! All I ask you is to take out the trash! I come home from working all them days on the road and you ain't even taken out the trash since I left!

Tony... DAN

Kiss my whole ass, Dan. TONY

I was about to. ANTHONY

You a lie! You been here all summer and not once have you mowed the lawn. I come home and the trash running over; I take it out. You don't have nothing to do, but take this trash out! You not a baby, Anthony. TONY

I told you I was about to! ANTHONY

Don't raise your voice at me in my house! TONY

Well stop yelling at people! I didn't know you were coming home! ANTHONY

That ain't the point, Anthony...! Point is to be disciplined 'bout something! TONY

Don't go there with me, dude. ANTHONY

I'm trying to teach you something! (*Beat.*) Oh, you don't hear me now? You so high and mighty, you can't take out the trash? You hear that, Dan? TONY

That's my cue. DAN

(DAN tries to exit.)

[*To Dan.*] TONY  
Mister Ivy League too good for taking the trash out. You more thankful to Dan about that game, than you are about a roof over your head!

ANTHONY

I'm thankful for it!

TONY

He come in here and you all ready to have a good time! I come in here and it's: "Who cares?" Like I ain't shit.

ANTHONY

It's not like that. I'm sorry you feel that way.

TONY

Cut the bullshit!

ANTHONY

Dude!

TONY

Stop calling me Dude! I'm your Dad. If you don't wanna call me that, then call me Tony! That's my mutha fucking gat damn name, shit! I'm trying to give you a break, something nobody ain't ever gave me.

ANTHONY

Whatever.

(TONY yanks the PS3 out the socket.)

DAN

Tony!  
We didn't save... it.

ANTHONY

Fuck you do that for.

TONY

You smell like alcohol!

(TONY hits the glass out of  
ANTHONY's hand.)

And, you gonna sit in here and drink it right in my face when I asked you not to?

(A moment.)

Dan! You been in here lettin' him drink when I asked you to watch him?

ANTHONY

Dan has nothing to do with it! I'm a grown ass man. I can have a drink if I want to.

(TONY threatens to break it.)

Put my game down!

(TONY doesn't. ANTHONY pushes TONY.)

DAN

Hey-hey, fellas... Why don't we all just go to Cracker Barrel. I'm buying.

TONY

You gonna push me in my own house?

(TONY puts the game down and pushes ANTHONY several times as...)

You got nuff nerve to push me. In my house?! Nigga, you crazy... I'll walk all over your face.

ANTHONY

*(Pushing back.)*

Fuck you, Tony!

(The two lions circle each other.)

TONY

Boy, you don't know what you messing with.

DAN

Everybody calm down.

(ANTHONY swings and misses; he almost gets Dan.)

Whoa!

TONY

You wanna fight for real... I'm gonna whip your ass.

(TONY charges ANTHONY. They fight. TONY's stronger and more experienced. The fight goes too far. DAN manages to pull TONY off.)

ANTHONY takes the fireplace poker. He holds it up to strike TONY. DAN shields TONY from the poker. TONY laughs from behind DAN. ANTHONY puts it down. He runs out the house. Silence.)

DAN

You didn't have to do that.

TONY

Who is you to tell me anything?

DAN

He didn't deserve that at all... What if he's gone...? For good?

(Beat.)

TONY

Let'em go. Who cares...?

(Silence.)

DAN

I got some blow in my pickup if you're interested. Been holding onto it for a while.

(Long silence.)

TONY

Nah, I'm good. I'm good, man.

6.

(ANTHONY's on the side of the road. He needs some guidance. He takes out the photo of his mother. He can't remember how she sounded.)

ANTHONY

I can't hear your voice... [*Silence: Perhaps he doesn't know what she'd say but keep walking.*]

(ANTHONY puts his headphones on.)

The *House Music* blares as he walks. The presence of his mother is felt. Time passes as he walks. He lets the music take over him. He can feel his mother.)

Yes. Yes... Yes. Yes! Yes! [Repeat "Yes" until you reach a point of emotional clarity.]

7.

(Time has passed. In Anthony's office, but not. ANTHONY's on the phone with someone.)

ANTHONY

I don't wait for anyone! I will pull you from the gat damn project all together if you don't—

(XAVIER enters with a Posted.  
ANTHONY gestures for him to sit.  
XAVIER does.)

--do what I tell you. I fucking hate being the asshole here... You're a fucking adult! You write for a fucking living, I don't give a hot damn that you had a long night, get your shit done... Yada-yada-yada-blah-blah-blah... Of course I'm not listening to you! It's fucking bullshit! I'm paying you a hundred and fifty thousand dollars to fucking give me a rewrite on it... Of course I'm livid...! I don't care. The deadline is today. You have until tomorrow before I pull you and stop payment... Ooooooh! That got you thinking, I'm not going through this shit with you again ... Tomorrow...? OK... Yes... Aiight...! And, one more thing. Check yourself into a Lindsey Lohan Clinic. You're becoming a fucking loser... Yeah, that was me being sensitive.

(ANTHONY hangs up.)

Hey, bud, how are ya?

XAVIER

OK.

ANTHONY

Finish the coverage on *The Stepbrother*?

XAVIER

Yes.

ANTHONY

Oh snap, Speedy Gonzalez, debrief me!

XAVIER

Umm... Well, it's about two families coming together like the Brady Bunch. One of the brothers is a skitzo and tries to kill everyone.

ANTHONY

He tries killing them all or just the new ones?

XAVIER

All... of them.

ANTHONY

Is it something I should read?

XAVIER

We should pass on it. The writing is almost unacceptable. It's a good concept, but I'm shocked by the elementary writing.

ANTHONY

That's pretty harsh, man.

XAVIER

I mean what I liked was the concept. There were some good action sequences. But, it perpetuates really bad stereotypes about Latinos and Black people.

ANTHONY

Why do you think all the other companies are looking at this script if the script is shit?

XAVIER

I don't know.

ANTHONY

Is it a movie?

XAVIER

A bad one.

ANTHONY

Then, I should read it! Bad movies still make money... Ah, you're just young and dumb... Where ya from?

Oakland.

XAVIER

You poor or something?

ANTHONY

Don't have much.

XAVIER

So, you're poor! I was wondering how you got into the intern program.

ANTHONY

I umm—

XAVIER

ANTHONY

Look. Lemme give you some advice. You're poor. I get how hard you've had to work to get here, blah, blah, blah. But, you're gonna have to abandon that shit. Nobody cares. I'm trying to help you, but it almost repulses me. I mean. Your demeanor. You're gonna have to shove that poor shit someplace else, like at church, because fuck. I think you're smart. I think you got something going. But, at the end of the day, you act like you don't belong here. Just between you and me, I think you're the best intern we got here. I don't give a damn how you got in here. I just want you to own your experience. So tomorrow, I don't wanna see you wearing those ugly hand-me-downs.

(ANTHONY gives XAVIER some money.)

You understand me, Xavier?

Yes.

XAVIER

ANTHONY

I want you to make something of yourself. Become a man like me. The biggest difference between you and me is: I can say yes to anything I want and you can't.

XAVIER

(Shaking head: Yes.)

Two people called. Chantee and that same guy who keeps calling and won't leave his name.

ANTHONY

I'm gonna show you how this is done. You get all kinds of people who want something from you when you're at this level. When they don't leave their name, it means they found your name on some website and want to send you materials.

(ANTHONY dials again.)

[*On the phone.*] What?!

(TONY enters. As Anthony last saw him, but not. A moment.)

TONY

Hi, is this Anthony?

ANTHONY

Yes. What the fuck do you want? You keep fucking calling my gat damn office phone, and you don't leave a message, mutha fucker. You call it again and I'm coming after you. You think I won't or I can't, and you got another thing coming. I'm sick of yo' shit!

TONY

It's Tony.

ANTHONY

The fuck is Tony?! I don't know any gat damn Tony.

TONY

Ummmmmm.... This is your dad. Tony.

(A moment.)

ANTHONY

How did you get my number?

TONY

I just wanted to see how you were doing.

ANTHONY

I'm not playing this game, I'm in the middle of something, gotta go.

TONY

It's been twelve years since I've seen you. Or heard from you. (*Beat.*) I saved up enough for a plane ticket.

(Rest.)

Where do you live now?

ANTHONY

Tony. I'm real sorry, but I'm not about to do this. I have too much going on to fool around with you. OK? That's the bottom line.

(A moment.)

TONY

Yo' auntie told me you worked for Warner Brothers. Senior VP of something and I gave a call.

ANTHONY

I gotta go.

TONY

Please...!

(A moment.)

Wait...

ANTHONY

You made your bed, so rot in it...

TONY

I am... In it.

(A moment.)

I'd like to see you. Even, if you only can stay for a coffee. (*Beat.*) Do you think you can come out and see me?

ANTHONY

What's wrong?

TONY

Up and got colon cancer...

(Time stops.)

But, I understand if you can't come. I know you're busy-busy-busy. (*Beat.*) I have money for your plane ticket.

ANTHONY

I'll think about it.

TONY

Don't think too long on it now. I'll call you tomorrow...?

(A moment. Silence. TONY hangs up.)

ANTHONY

Man...

(ANTHONY hangs up.)

XAVIER

Do you want me to get you another peppermint soy latte or anything?

ANTHONY

That'd be great. And, some chocolate.

(A moment.)

XAVIER

Will you be in tomorrow?

ANTHONY

Probably.... I don't know my dad all that well. Nice guy for the most part, but. We just never connected. You know... And, he's dying... I don't know if I care...

XAVIER

What would you like for me to tell Chantee when she calls back?

ANTHONY

She keeps calling because she thinks I'm doing the same thing to William that my father did to me.

XAVIER

Oh...

ANTHONY

What...?

Nothing. XAVIER

Spill it. ANTHONY

I can't. Sir. XAVIER

Don't call me sir! Tell me. ANTHONY

XAVIER  
It's just... She tells me things, sir, I mean, Anthony, I don't want her to, but she keeps talking. There I said it, I'm sorry for not telling you sooner, but it's weird, I was lying by omission and now I don't feel so guilty about it, but I'm sorry, don't take my job. I didn't know what to do.

What has she told you? ANTHONY

XAVIER  
I don't really want to get in the middle— OK... Chantee says you don't love William. That's what she says at the end of each call.

And you believe her? ANTHONY

(A moment.)

No— XAVIER

What else does she say? ANTHONY

XAVIER  
That you don't see him on the weekends.

You're a little tattletale aren't you. ANTHONY

You're my boss. XAVIER

ANTHONY

So it's been a month since I've seen him, he knows I love him. Last time I took him to the batting cages... Missing a coupla weekends isn't a big deal. She requires too much out of me...

XAVIER

I understand.

ANTHONY

I wish I would've never met Chantee. She was a mistake.

XAVIER

Was... William a mistake?

(A moment.)

ANTHONY

What's your dad like?

(Silence.)

XAVIER

My dad died a few years ago. Gambler... Sometimes we didn't have very much to eat. I had no respect for him and we didn't get along. I shut him out. My grandma told me that my dad would always be my dad and I had to respect him no matter how much I hated it... My dad was full of promises, but I was the guy that could make anything happen. So, I took charge. I made it happen. I stopped accepting no as an answer. When he made a promise, I made sure he kept it. If he said we were going to play pool when he got back, I made sure I stayed up to play pool. Even if it meant I stayed up all night. A couple times I did... Things got better because I tried... He got killed over a gambling related thing. I used to think if he just died, it'd make everything better. I wouldn't care. But, when he died... I felt so guilty... I mean, he left us with so much debt. We lost everything. But, not even that compared to what I really lost... I'll go get your peppermint soy latte and chocolate.

(Silence.)

Should I?

ANTHONY

Yeah.

(XAVIER exits. Time ticks down.)

8.

(A park. Time has passed. Time still ticks. TONY's reads a romance novel. He's old. He has a mean cough. He gasps.)

TONY

*(Responding to the novel. Lasting about a minute.)*  
Don't do it...! No...! *(Beat.)* Oh god! This is too good!

(ANTHONY enters. TONY doesn't notice.)

ANTHONY

*(While throwing the football.)*  
Think fast.

(TONY doesn't catch it. He's not good at Football. )

I thought you were good at football?

TONY

Anthony?

(Silence. They try to play catch for a while, as Time begins to move forward for the first time in their history, as...)

ANTHONY

Didn't you play with Spike all the time?

TONY

Spike's a professional player now.

(They stop playing.)

ANTHONY

I've imagined this moment time and again. Thought I'd wanna take a hammer to your head, but... I don't. *(Beat.)* We've lost so much time... I gotta come to terms with this. *(Beat.)* I have a son.

TONY

What's his name?

ANTHONY

William.

TONY

Ya bring'em?

ANTHONY

He's in California with his mother.

(Beat.)

TONY

You married?

ANTHONY

No... Just didn't work out... She wanted me to see you. To understand you. She thought it would help me to learn how to. Love my son. She thinks I hate my son. I think I hate my son. (*A moment.*) I hate my son. I hate him. Did you just not love me, Tony? Do you hate me?

(A moment.)

TONY

You know after all the cancer, I walked outta there?! Many cigarettes I done smoked. I shoulda got lung cancer, but I up and got colon cancer. This world ain't never gonna stop throwing curve balls. (*Beat.*) It's so good to see you. I thought you had long since forgot 'bout me. It was real bad. When I called you, doctor said I only had a month. Thought I'd never see you again. But, I pulled on through.

(TONY pulls out an envelope.)

There was a time when I hated myself so much that. I thought there was nobody in the world who could love me. You know? You were a constant reminder of the good that's in the world that I fucked up. Felt guilty. But, I knew you was OK without me-better without me. I had no part in making this wonderful kid who writes letters to his father in prison. Writes stories for me. I couldn't get it out of my head that everything 'bout me, took away from this kid. Without me you had a chance. And, I couldn't be accountable for messing you up. I ain't never been so sorry for anything in my life. When I got outta jail twenty years ago, I had to see you. I shouldn't've. I shoulda left well-enough alone, but I loved you too much. I couldn't help myself. Last thing I wanted in the world was for you to hate me. I wanted to prove to you that I wasn't evil or stupid. In my head, I had this fantasy of what it would be like for us if you didn't hate me. Cause you shole nuff had a reason to. But, I knew I had messed up

big. And, I knew I was gonna have to climb through a whole lotta shit before we could ever be happy. Didn't realize it was gonna be that tough. Didn't know that there was a possibility of it never happening. Understand? So, I kept trying. Got off drugs because I was trying to make you proud of me. Used to be the other way 'round. The son wanted so much to know the father, but the father didn't want nothing to do with the son. Shit, that's how I was raised... Just didn't want you to feel like I had felt... But, to me, I think you were right to cut me out. That's what you shoulda done. I can't blame you. And, that's what I wanted to say.

(Silence.)

Here.

(TONY gives ANTHONY the envelope.  
ANTHONY looks inside.)

ANTHONY

What's this for?

TONY

It's all I have. The deed's in there too... just in case...

(ANTHONY gives it back, laughing.)

ANTHONY

I'm not taking your money.

TONY

It's yours.

ANTHONY

It's too late for this.

TONY

It's yours... Do whatever you want with it.

ANTHONY

I can't take this from you.

TONY

Just take the money.

ANTHONY

No thank you.

TONY

What am I gonna do with it? It would make me very happy if you took the money.  
(*Beat.*) I'm so glad you met me here. I love this park. I sit here almost everyday. All day. Reading.

ANTHONY

I'm not taking your money.

TONY

At least lemme buy somethang from you with it. I'll pay to read one of your stories.

ANTHONY

I don't do that anymore.

(Silence.)

TONY

I know you better than you think I do... I know you love your boy.

(Silence.)

ANTHONY

I wanna give you back...

(ANTHONY gives TONY the Oyster Lipton. Silence. A moment.)

I never deserved this.

(A moment.)

TONY

This was my father's watch. His name's engraved.

(The world finally comes together. It's a watch. TONY gives it back to ANTHONY. ANTHONY sits down.)

You're named after my daddy. He served in World War Two. Bella and me. We were gonna name you Phillip, but then my daddy died. We decided to name you after him, which would make you junior. He had me when he was in his Sixties. I didn't know him at all. Mean ole self. You just like him. You look like'em. Dress like'em. God! You even talk like'em. All proper and shit. That man wouldn't let nobody in who didn't work for it. But, when he'd let you in. Boy! I'm telling you, you

wouldn't ever have a better day! He taught me how to read when I was three. Smart man. There for me. Complete opposites though ... Thought you'd like to know what you're made of... He gave me the watch the day before he died. I wore it everyday 'til I saw you and I realized it was yours. So, I left it on the table.

(Silence.)

ANTHONY

A long time ago you told me to write a story about a cursed house. You remember that?

TONY

No.

ANTHONY

You are my horror story. (*Beat.*) I've been building a house my entire life. It was designed to not include you. I built it with precision. I proved to everyone that my house was strong. It was well earned. It was the house I wanted. And, when I completed it, I realized you were already in the house. You were this Lazy Boy recliner that didn't match my Stickley furniture. I threw out the recliner, and after I'd lock the door and turn around, there was the recliner. Back in my living room. Bigger. Tackier. And, in worse shape than before. I'd throw it out again. And, it'd waltz right back in before I knew it. I'd burn it. Tear it up. Give it to somebody else. But, every time, that recliner would show back up. I finally just had to leave it. I had to be cool with the idea that you were in the house. I had built you into my house without knowing it. You're my father. We're just alike. I can't escape that...

(Silence. A moment. ANTHONY really forgives TONY.)

TONY

You rememba the time we was driving in that beat up car of yours?

ANTHONY

Yeah, that was a good time.

TONY

Why meth-heads try ta smile at you when they don't got no teeth...? I haven't figured it out yet!

ANTHONY

(*While he makes a face.*)

They just smile to be smiling.

(They both laugh. TONY throws the ball back at ANTHONY. They hold the ball together. Together they form a slimy, ugly oyster.)

TONY

I don't know, but, it shole is funny to me! (*Beat.*) I hope William ain't an ugly baby, 'cause you was so ugly Bella cried.

(Maybe that got something right. Who cares? At least they're laughing as the lights fade. In their hands, the football becomes an oval pearl. It's a little off, but it's still a pearl. End of play.)